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VIOLET;

OR,

7.

THE TIMES WE LIVE IN.

Harriet C.W. Shubrick

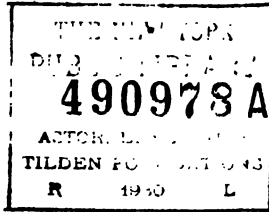
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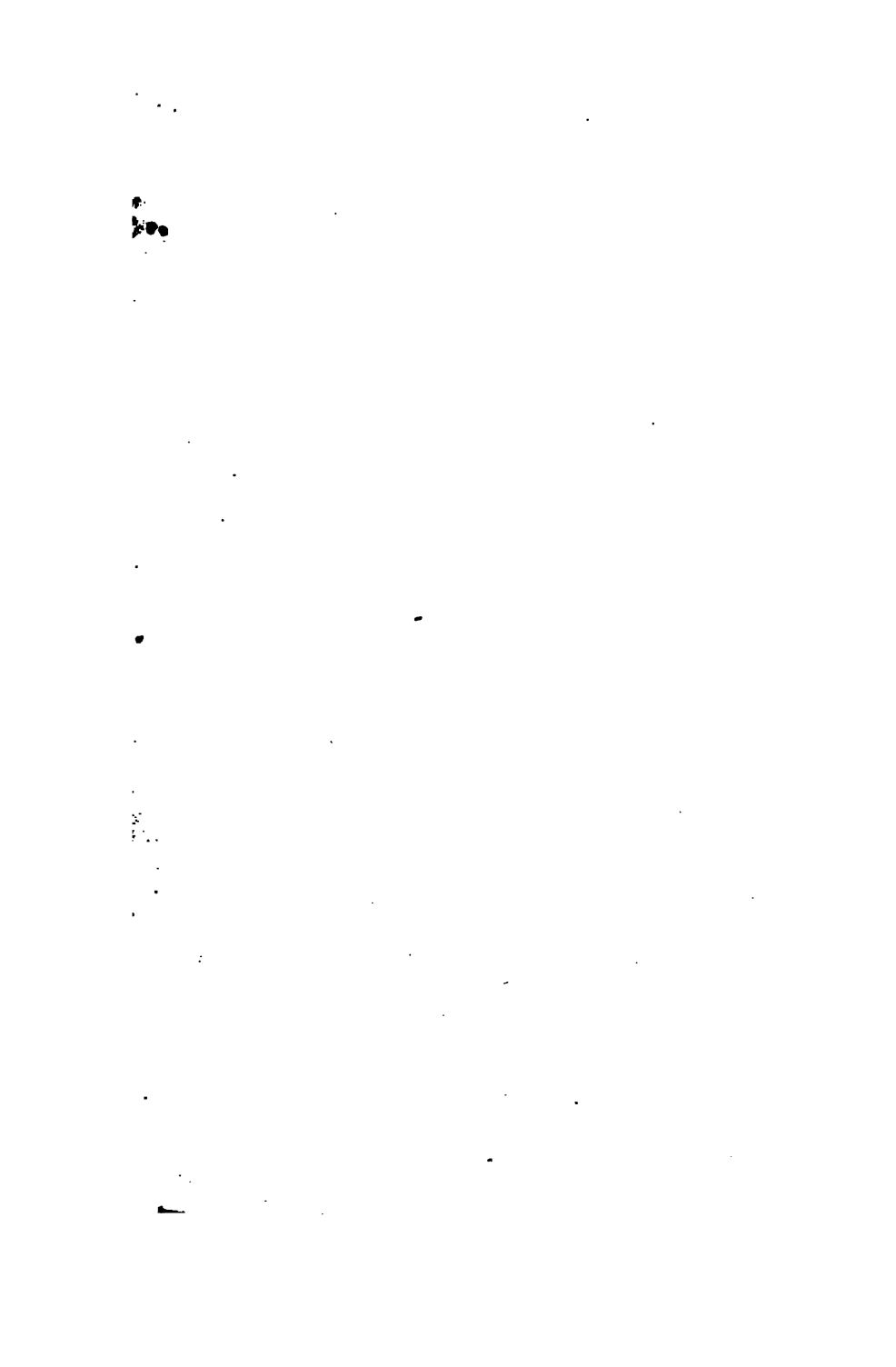
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NOT FOR
CIRCULATION
EXTRA

INTRODUCTION.

VIOLET was to have been sent into the world to meet her fate without an Introduction. But it occurred to a friend—the scene being laid in Philadelphia—that the reader might possibly be disposed to fancy the characters as real as the follies of *The Times We Live In*.

The Author takes this opportunity to assure the public that *personalities* are entirely at variance with the views intended to be inculcated in the work, and that the characters are altogether *myths*, pen and ink men and women, who die with *The Times We Live In*, as they were created to illustrate the follies or virtues of the same.



VIOLET.

CHAPTER I.

THE day had been disagreeable and drizzly, and the storm, steadily increasing since sundown, seemed now at its height; the wind blew from every point of the compass at the same time, and the rain fell in torrents:—a driving pelting rain,—such as the blind man supposed it, when, taking shelter under the lee of a house,—the spout from the roof conducting the foaming water upon the unfortunate's head,—he exclaimed, with ludicrous resignation, “Well, sure enough, it never *rains* but it *pours*.”

But with her chair rolled up to the table, under the drop-light, and deep in the last German novel, Mrs. Irving did not hear the rain pattering against the closed shutters, or the wind shrieking and moaning like a legion of Banshees around the house. Cosily nestled among the cushions on the sofa, near the glass doors leading into the conservatory, Violet was as earnestly engaged in building castles in the air,—a favorite amusement of hers.

Crushed into the low, wide, elaborately carved arm-chair, Mrs. Irving seems an enormous woman: hoops

- and flounces: her figure proper is almost as slight and girlish as Violet's. Her luxuriant brown hair a *marvel*, her teeth *splendid*, and her *bloom*, as undying as the roses of York and Lancaster, are disclaimers of age.

There can be no question of Violet's: the dew is yet upon the flower; the delicately rounded cheek attests her juvenility; her very attitude, as she lies there in the warm glow of crimson velvet, her cheek resting childlike on her arm—white as a snow-drift—shading her eyes from the light with the dearest little dimpled hand all in a glitter with diamond rings, smiling to herself as she spins Hope's bright tissue, which, according to Moore,—“Like the web in the leaves the spider weaves, though often broke in the breeze, is spun again.” Ay, again and again each human heart can testify.

The State-house clock struck ten; ten chimed the little cupid wreathed with flowers on the rosewood cabinet.

“So late!” exclaimed Violet, in a tone of surprise; and, consulting her miniature watch, added, with a very near approach to a sigh, “We shall have no visitors to-night.”

“Patent-leather and dress coats were not made for this weather,” responded Mrs. Irving, her eyes on her book; “a cigar doubtless has consoled your admirers for the loss of your society.”

“Sensible young men,” replied Violet, trying to look grave, a comic little smile flickering round her lips; “they would not look fit to be seen on a night like this, with the curl blown out of their hair and the die washed from the killing moustache!”

Absorbed in her romance, Mrs. Irving, who indeed had heard only the last word of the sentence, read on.

With an arch glance at the preoccupied, Violet went to the harp and played

“O Willie, we have missed you, dear;”

Singing, mischievous girl, as if improvising the tender ballad. Mrs. Irving did not frown; it was not her style; but, laying aside her book, remarked, rather petulantly for her,—“I can’t see what the girls find in Willie Ashton to rave about.”

“Can’t you, grandmamma?” asked Violet with provoking *naïveté*, bending over the harp and smiling up in Mrs. Irving’s face. “Why, isn’t he the most aristocratic-looking young man in Philadelphia? Hasn’t he the dearest little feet? Doesn’t he sing divinely, and waltz like——”

“Like a dancing-master,” suggested the grandmother.

“Like an angel, grandmamma.”

“An extraordinary accomplishment for an angel, dear!”

“Men-angels being wingless, waltz,” persisted Violet, laughing.

“And smoke, and play cards, and get tipsy,” was the grandmother’s sarcastic addenda. But conveniently deaf, Violet went on with the enumeration of angelic perfections.

“No one leads the German so well as Willie; we can’t get on in the lancers without him; and then the darling has such *glorious* eyes, blue as the summer sky!”

“That say *nothing*,” retorted Mrs. Irving. “One might as well attempt to read his thoughts, if he has any, in his shining boot.”

“Treason!” cried Violet; and, gayly running up to her grandmother, stopped her with a kiss.

“Some one, Harry I suspect, (and the smile changed

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that heart had suffered. So almost impossible is the nearest and dearest to know each other! the freshness of early girlhood,—the playfulness of it, and earnest feeling of the woman,—her face suddenly lighting up with gay fancies, and the shadow of deeper feelings at times paling the delicately rounded cheeks and veiling the brilliancy of her full dark eye, she was a fascinating creature; and although she talked nonsense sometimes, as girls will, and older women too, when the fit is upon them, she was a *thinker*, a young lady of pretty decided traits of character. High-toned and truthful, hers was one of those happy natures who pass through life under the charming illusion that all the world is as kind and honest as themselves. Loving devotedly the only parent, indeed the relative she had ever known, who, youthful in tastes and pursuits, was more like an elder sister than a grandmother, the young enthusiast had resisted every attempt to drill her into a *woman of the world*; the affectionate heart refused to be narrowed down to cold conventionalism.

Could you ever happen to see, in some retired country, a barrel sunk in a natural spring, and marked the gurgling up clear and cool, and flowing out—a tiny rill sparkling in the green moss around, and meandering away through sunlight and through shade? Did to the grandmother there *was* a time when her encrusted heart throbbed with impulses as high and generous:—a sweet fountain turned to bitterness! Was there none among her numerous flatterers and friends, the Prophet of old, to cast in a branch of the blessed fig tree? No one to speak to the poor Annie of the land of heaven, of her dead mother? Yes; a gentle,

to a little pout,) has prejudiced you against poor Willie, grandmamma."

"You are mistaken, dear; Vane has never spoken to me of him: my opinion of Willie is based upon what I have myself observed. Indolent, conceited, selfish, he possesses neither depth of feeling nor stability of character. Violet, beware you rue not your present folly, and, when too late, weep bitter tears over the infatuation which leads you to reject Harry Vane and flirt as you are doing (for it can only be a flirtation) with an idle dissipated boy!"

Violet was not pleased with the turn the conversation had taken; opening very wide her large dark eyes, fringed with long lashes, she exclaimed,—“Grandmamma turned Cupid’s advocate! You amaze me!”

Mrs. Irving did not smile; her face was as serious as the tone in which she said,—motioning the laughing girl to a low, lounging chair beside her,—

“Sit down and listen to the *end* of *one* flirtation. I had a friend very like you, Violet, whose coquetry destroyed her own happiness and broke the noblest, kindest heart that ever beat in man’s breast; but, you shall hear.”

Cold and imperturbable, Mrs. Irving’s agitation surprised and sobered Violet; her grandmother seldom alluded to her past life, and, ignorant of her antecedents, Violet could not help suspecting the sad experience, purporting to be that of another, was her own; and very glad was Violet of the hint; it explained much that had puzzled her; she had found many contradictions difficult to reconcile; and it was a great relief to the affectionate girl to discover that what had seemed hardness of heart was, in truth, the cicatrix, proving the cruel, cruel wound

which that heart had suffered. So almost impossible is it for the nearest and dearest to know each other!

In the freshness of early girlhood,—the playfulness of a child, and earnest feeling of the woman,—her face suddenly lighting up with gay fancies, and the shadow of tenderer feelings at times paling the delicately rounded cheek and veiling the brilliancy of her full dark eye, Violet was a fascinating creature; and although she did talk nonsense sometimes, as girls will, and older people too, when the fit is upon them, she was a *thinker*, and a young lady of pretty decided traits of character.

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Did you ever happen to see, in some retired country nook, a barrel sunk in a natural spring, and marked the *water* gurgling up clear and cool, and flowing out—a tiny streamlet sparkling in the green moss around, and meandering away through sunlight and through shade?

And to the grandmother there *was* a time when her world-incrusted heart throbbed with impulses as high and generous:—a sweet fountain turned to bitterness! Was there none among her numerous flatterers and friends, like the Prophet of old, to cast in a branch of the blessed healing tree? No one to speak to the poor Annie of duty, of heaven, of her dead mother? Yes; a gentle,

loving creature, when the other girls at the fashionable boarding-school avoided Annie Brown, and treated the mechanic's daughter with contempt, came to her aid, protected and shielded the talented, proud girl, from the insolence of her tormentors; and, true to her school friendship, seeming not to notice the wound the sufferer sought to conceal, would have led her to the only true source of consolation, had she not perversely turned from her to seek forgetfulness in dissipation.

Though "trained in the way she should go," Annie ceased to pray and to read her Bible. But we spare the painful recital,—we forbear to put aside the smiling semblances that conceal the under-current of life.

Verily, man's is a twofold existence; and often, alas too often, while that which meets the eye is glittering with sunshine, the heart-world is involved in deepest gloom!

A desperate gambler in the game of life, losing happiness, Annie Brown played for wealth, for distinction, and was successful; she married into *one of the first families*, was mistress of a splendid establishment and elegant equipage, was fêted and flattered. The husband, a cipher appended to the \$500,000, to be sure, but good-natured withal, and indulging her every whim,—what more could she desire?

Often did the beautiful highly gifted wife ask herself the question; and the empty, aching heart replied, "Sympathy, companionship, *something* to love!"

When too late, poor Annie discovered—like the fruit growing on the borders of the Dead Sea, luscious and beautiful to look upon, but crumbling to ashes, bitter ashes, at the touch—that riches, fashion, adulation, contain no food for the heart. But it was the old story of

the Spartan boy and the fox. The answer never transpired. To the world, Mrs. Irving's life was a *brilliant success!*

The tale was told, and gently drawing Violet to her, and impressing a kiss upon the forehead of the weeping girl, Mrs. Irving said, in a broken, husky voice,—“Fancy no bright Utopia for your future, dear one; indulge not in fond dreams of happiness; happiness! we all talk of it,—who has found it? Disappointment, vexation, *misery*, is the common lot. ‘There is a stern likeness in the fate of man;’ yet each vainly hopes to prove an exception.”

“Don’t talk so, grandmamma; you frighten me;” and Violet began to cry; she had cried a great deal during the sad recital. But there were no tears in the grandmother’s eyes; once they were dimmed with weeping, but the source of tears was now dry! As if turned to stone, Mrs. Irving sat gazing at the table before her.

“Strange,” she murmured, speaking more to herself than to Violet; “strange this depth of love within the human breast,—a fancy which a word, a jest, an awkwardness, anything can dispel, yet nursed into a ‘being and a power,’ masters the strongest mind; ‘a flower, brushed by the bee’s wing from the tree; a bubble on the sea, broken by the gentle dip of the swallow’s wing; the fire-fly’s tiny spark, crushed by a touch,’—resisting reason, pride, ay, even unworthiness in the object!”

The last words were scarcely audible; she remained silent a few minutes, when, as if the statue had suddenly become instinct with life, turning to Violet, she said, almost fiercely,—

“Violet, if you would not be *wretched*, crush out every spark of passion while yet you may; nursed with

day-dreams, fanned by earnest questionings of hope and fear, ere you suspect your danger, it becomes a devouring flame! When the heart has learned to thrill at the mere mention of the loved one's *name*; when pleasure is only such, if shared with *them*, and sorrow loses its bitterness while they whisper comfort; when to see them, hear their voice, know that *they* are near, is *happiness*, their absence misery,—O heaven! a love like this, if——”

The sentence was gasped rather than spoken, and all that Violet gathered of the last part was death,—death to the *heart*, though the body lives on! A long, tearless sob, and she relapsed again into silence.

The cold, fixed, stony gaze, made Violet tremble. Was this, too, a new phase of character; or was her grandmother going mad? Wild with terror,—“Speak to me!” she cried, “for heaven’s sake, speak, grandmother! don’t look so;” and, twining her arms around Mrs. Irving, Violet looked up imploringly in the rigid face.

Recalled to herself by the agonized tone, Mrs. Irving started, pressed her hand to her brow, gave a long shuddering sigh, and with an effort at composure, said, speaking fast and nervously,—“Poor girl! I loved her as a sister; shrinking from the world’s sympathy, she dressed her face in smiles, and duped the hundred-tongued tattler. To me, and me alone, were confided the sufferings of that breaking, I should say, rather, that freezing heart; for it did not break—it turned to *ice*! And this wreck of lofty aspirations, beautiful sympathy, and warm affections, *her own act*! the result of absurd contemptible coquetry! Violet, can you wonder I am alarmed at the course you are pursuing?”

Starting to her feet, Mrs. Irving walked hurriedly up and down the room; gradually her step, irregular and rapid, grew more steady; the bland smile returned to her lip; the mask was resumed, and, seating herself at the table and taking up a book, accosting Violet as if nothing had occurred, she began relating to her the story.

Occupied with the domestic tragedy to which she had been listening, and the unkind opinion Mrs. Irving had expressed of her lover, passionately fond as Violet was of legends, and those of the Hertz Mountains especially, the unreal horrors failed to arrest her attention; and though seeming to listen, she unfortunately distributed her monosyllabic answers most injudiciously, replying yes, when she should have said no; and at last broke in abruptly upon a sentence of which she had not heard a word, with "Grandmamma, you have misjudged poor Willie sadly; he is bright and full of drollery; most people are volatile at his age, but he has a great deal of feeling, and is extremely kind-hearted; you make no allowances for a petted only son."

Mrs. Irving replied by a dissenting shake of the head, and that pitying, provoking smile, harder to bear than bitter invective or flat contradiction. Violet looked very much as if she was about to cry again.

"Poh, poh! you don't pretend to deny that Willie is a flirt, Violet? He piques himself upon it, dear; you *know* he does. From his manner one would conclude he was engaged to every girl he converses with."

"Oh! is that *all*?" said Violet, brightening up; "devotion is the present style; everybody is *devoted*, everybody in causeless ecstasies, and in breathless haste when they

have nothing on earth to do; be candid, grandmamma, blame the times we live in, but not poor Willie."

Here the subject dropped; and, the burden lifted from her heart, Violet chatted away as usual, and in the course of conversation mentioned having met Mrs. Ives in the street that morning, and that she was looking very badly.

"*Fasting*," remarked Mrs. Irving, a sarcastic smile curling her beautiful lips. "Poor Lucy! a nice person spoiled by fanaticism."

Poor Lucy was the generous warm-hearted girl who had taken her part at school, at whose house she had met the husband who had elevated the mechanic's daughter to her present position in society; the friend who, though neglected and forgotten, was the first to offer sympathy when her husband died; the patient, sympathizing nurse who seldom quitted her bedside during the illness that followed the sad tidings of the death of her only child, Violet's father, who died abroad. Dissimilar in fate as in character, Mrs. Ives's interior life was blessed with that "peace the world can neither give nor take away;" the outward, a continued succession of afflictions,—husband, children, every near relative, had passed before her into a better world, leaving her alone in the old family mansion. Devoting her life to good works, Mrs. Ives's heart spanned all creation in its grasp of love; struck off no link in the great chain of human affinities, because the gilding had worn off; on the contrary, with patient, unwearied love the excellent widow carefully gathered up, and tenderly strove to unite the severed links sought out in the haunts of misery,—among the outcasts of crime, the down-trodden, the debased. Feeling, with the beautiful humility of the good divine, when he met the malefactor on the way to the gallows,—“So would *I* have

violated the laws of God and man, but for sustaining power from on high."

Mrs. Ives had the sweetest way of performing "those little kindnesses which most leave undone, or despise; a blessing she was to *all*; God made her so, and week-day holiness fell from her noiseless as the snow." She had her faults.

"There clings an earth-stain to earth's loveliest things."

In plain prose, every son and daughter of fallen Adam have their crotchets. Some, fanciful little grace-notes,—rather amusing than otherwise,—the less favored, dreadful long semibreves that would try the patience of Job, did he live in these fast times. Mrs. Ives's were very bearable; Jane, the girl she had brought up, and faithful old Mary, the sharer in her life's sorrows, would tell you the dear lady was *perfection*! Such was poor Lucy, the "nice person spoiled by fanaticism!"

Cousins, married young, with similar tastes and views, the husband and wife seemed to have but one heart. Their first child was a boy, bright, precocious, but so extremely delicate that their love for him was ever a cup of trembling. Ere long another little claimant for their watchful care appeared, but love and care were unavailing to detain him with them; at the most endearing age the little spirit returned to God who gave it; a third, a fourth, leaving another and another vacant place in the nursery, as the music of pattering feet and infant prattle passed away forever.

Dearer, more precious to the bereaved parents grew the talented boy; rapidly maturing in the school of affliction. Great was their joy, when little Helen was born; yet Albert's exceeded it, as did his anxiety, when the period, fatal to others, drew near; and when it passed, his joy was *unbounded*.

But the death-cloud was gathering; the fearful lustre of eye, and mantling hectic, proved their darling Albert doomed to an early grave. He died at seventeen, of rapid consumption. Six weeks after, little Helen followed; ill but a few hours, of membranous sore-throat, she was snatched from them in a moment;—lovely, unchanged, it was hard to believe her dead. Heart-breaking it was to see the parents kneeling beside the little coffin, the big tears streaming down their cheeks, and hear their fervent,—“The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” The following, written by the mother at the time, will, perhaps, best describe their feelings:—

Thou, thou my God, alone dost know
My aching bosom's weight of woe;
Father, do thou the grace bestow,
To say *'tis well*.

Whatever cross thy love ordains,
Teach me to feel while faith sustains,
And every murmuring thought restrains,—
Thy will be done.

And e'en while falls the human tear
O'er severed ties, and hopes most dear,
Still be my heart's submissive prayer,—
Thy will be done.

Come weal, come woe, whate'er betide;
Whate'er be granted, or denied,
Dear Father, let thy love decide,—
Thy will be done.

Mr. Ives's health, at no time very robust, sank under the blow; and without a murmur, without any visible complaint; day by day he grew more feeble. The last one

came; and when the keen autumnal blast strewed the pavement with the seared and yellow leaves of the old weeping-willow before the door, they laid the father beside his children in the family vault at St. Paul's.

Alone in the old house, silent as that vault, the twilight deepening around her, as the childless widow watched the huge willow swaying about in the wind, a sudden gust every now and then gathering up the long branches and sending them sweeping past the window, her thoughts often reverted to the past,—to the time when she came there a bride; her joy and pride when she saw her first-born in its father's arms—his child, their child; the smile with which he gazed at its sweet baby face; Albert's astonishment when, a few years after, turning back the mantle from the flannel bundle on the bed beside her, she showed him his tiny brother; the little fellow's wonder and amazement at the red, wee baby; the happy times they had together, and how he sorrowed with them when the little cherub died; the singular affection he had for Helen; the last evening they passed in his room—a sultry night in June; the fragile boy, white as the snowy pillows supporting him in the easy chair by the window, gazing at the sky quivering with stars, and the clear moonlight shining through the drooped boughs of the sombre old willow.

How vividly objects, at the moment scarcely noticed, when thinking the trying scene over in after years, come before us again, forming a picture never to be effaced from the memory,—the tree, the sky, the very furniture of the room; her husband leaning with his back against the mantelpiece, gazing as intently upon Albert as Albert at the star-lit sky; Helen on a low stool at her brother's feet! As she bent over him to arrange his pil-

lows, how the affectionate boy threw his arms around her, as he said, "Mother dear, I shall *often* think of you in heaven."

His father's convulsive sob, and dear little Helen's stealing round to him, and saying, in what was meant to be a whisper, the tears coursing down her own cheeks,—
"Father, please don't; it makes brother worse when we cry." Unable to control his feelings, how the father rushed from the room; how the dying boy's eyes followed him; the effort she made to command her voice when she asked Albert if he had no fears; the pressure of his cold, damp hand, and the cheerful tone in which he replied, "*None*, dear mother. Since I have realized that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all sin*,' I have enjoyed sweet peace."

The smile and hectic flush that for the moment lit up his pale face as he exclaimed, glancing out of the window, "If earth is so very beautiful, what must heaven be?" and how quickly that smile faded, when, burying her face in her hands, poor Helen burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break. Weak as he was, and gasping for breath, how the dear boy tried to soothe her, bending down and kissing her trembling hands; his,—
"Look at me, look at your brother, darling," so tender, so affectionate, it wrung the heart he would have comforted! "Don't cry, we shall soon meet in that blessed world where there is no sorrow, no pain,—never, never to part more;" and the tone in which Helen sobbed out,—
"Will you think of me, *too*, in heaven?" her hands still to her face. "Yes, pet; come, let me see you smile." How the little hands opened for a moment, and closed again, the tears trickling faster than ever through the *slender fingers*!

Mrs. Ives saw it all as when it happened, but it brought no repining; her heart was with her dear ones in that better world where tears are not, and partings cannot come.

* * * * *

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. The wind was east, and the dull, muffled knell of time, startlingly distinct, echoed through the large drawing-rooms.

"Ring for John, dear," said Mrs. Irving, with a nervous shudder; "it is time we were in bed;" and, leaving the servant extinguishing the lights, Violet and her grandmother passed through the marble-paved hall, and up the wide stairs, and exchanging the good-night kiss at Mrs. Irving's dressing-room door, parted, Violet to dream of Willie, the grandmother, restless, wakeful, and depressed, to realize that successful ambition, as disappointed love, hath its thorns.

Violet excused herself from accompanying her grandmother in her drive the next morning, on the plea of wishing to practice a difficult piece of music; in reality, to indulge in castle-building, and solve, if possible, the difficult problem why Willie did not propose. A thousand times had he made her understand she was dearer to him than all the world beside; but in vain she pondered and puzzled over *whys* and *wherefores*, and with a weary, discontented sigh, selecting the last opera from a pile of music, she laid it on the stand before her, tuned the harp, played a few bars, and, her head resting against the instrument, her hand wandering among the chords, now and again rousing a sweet, low note, she was soon so absorbed that she heard neither the ring at the bell nor the familiar voice inquiring for her in the entry.

The drawing-room door was open. Ashton entered unperceived.

"Asleep, Miss Violet?" he asked, advancing toward her with a smile.

Violet started. Had Willie seen her grandmother driving, and embraced the opportunity to decide his fate? Her heart fluttering, with a heightened color she glanced at her lover. Willie was coolly rolling one of the most comfortable chairs in the room to the harp, and throwing himself loungingly into it, began playing with his hat.

Shall I repeat the conversation? We must make allowances for the youth. Willie Ashton is a *young* man, a *very young* man; a beau at school, a beau at college, keeping fast trotters, and spending \$30,000 a year. A millionaire expectant, has he not a right to play billiards and ecarté all day, smoke any quantity of cigars, and talk any amount of nonsense?

"I'll take music lessons, and go to sleep practicing; it is vastly interesting; you are perfectly radiant this morning, Miss Violet; a glorious day; have you been out?"

"No, it is too wet."

"Chestnut Street is crowded; I walked from the Girard down to Levy's behind a splendid foot and ankle, and amused myself counting skirts; the lady in question carried six, including the skeleton. By-the-way, that morning dress of yours is *perfect*; how well the cord and tassels match the color; and your hair—always wear it so—it suits your style exactly."

This to a girl whose heart was all in a flutter, and her cheeks tingling in the expectation of a declaration of love!

Out of patience with him, provoked with herself,

thoroughly disgusted, Violet wondered she could ever have thought the silly trifle good looking or agreeable.

Their eyes met; his, brimful of love; a smile, his peculiar smile, sweet and innocent as a child's, was on his lip.

"He is handsome, very handsome," Violet said to herself. "All the young men discuss dress, though grandmamma does denounce it as undignified and trifling. Harry, wise as he is, knew my shawls and ribbons by heart when he loved me."

"A few of us have subscribed, and intend giving a daylight dance in the country, Miss Violet; won't you come to it?" asked Ashton, drumming on the crown of his hat.

"Delightful! certainly, with pleasure," answered Violet. "To whom beside yourself are we indebted for the charming novelty?"

Ashton named the young men, adding, "We have the nicest set of fellows for managers,—up to the German, or to anything."

"To lancers?" inquired Violet.

"Vile, tame things!" replied Ashton in an impatient tone. "Lasco has humbugged the public famously with a name; the rascal's been bribed by a secret convention of grandmammias to smuggle in the four and back two, ladies chain, and the absurd nodding to one another at corners, with which the old ladies amused themselves when they were young. I wanted to come round last night to talk it over with you, but it rained like the mischief, and I dislike to travel by water. We think of confining our invitations to the unmarried."

Her grandmother's remark occurred to Violet, and

she smiled as she inquired what was his objection to married persons.

"Why, it don't do to make exceptions, Miss Violet, and *some* matrons make hateful remarks about spirited waltzing; I believe in my soul it's sheer envy."

"Not a whit more severe than single non-waltzers," said Violet.

Ashton thought a moment, and, assuming the look of a Solomon, replied, "A bright idea occurs to me; I'll obligingly volunteer to fill out the cards, and forget every *slow* girl!"

"Heavens! I hope it's not a *fast* party? I assure you I do not feel at all flattered to be included in that category."

"Oh, you know what I mean—*extra proprieties*—persons who think it a crime to talk nonsense, and look injured by a jest. I like women well spiced with deviltry."

"Mrs. Denby, for example."

"Excuse me," and Willie shuddered: "too bitter, too pungent; there's no fun in her; it's unmitigated malice. Mrs. Denby has lived too long; sensible persons die with their bloom, like sweet summer flowers."

"Suppose, like Mrs. Green, they bloom forever?"

"The horror! Sid. Smith vows she lays on her roses with a trowel! Thank heaven, I'm not so delicate as the man who fainted whenever the shadow of an ugly woman passed over him; but I can't stand her. Mrs. Green shan't be at our dance, that's positive."

"How old was your mother when she died?" and Violet's face dimpled all over with arch smiles, bright as sunshine on a rippling stream.

Willie raised his eyes from the white hand, tapping

the crown of his hat with a puzzled look of inquiry; but instantly comprehending her meaning, he put on what he called his funereal face, replied,—“My sainted mother, heaven rest her soul, died in beauty, like a rose blown from the parent stem.”

“A pearl dropped from a diadem,” added Violet, elongating hers.

“Don’t laugh, Miss Violet; *she* taught me these verses, when, a little boy, I stood at the knee of my *dissolute*, widowed parent,—as the worthy Mrs. Partington would say;” and Willie passed his hand over his eyes.

Little addicted to poetry, as her fat, wheezy King-Charles,—a ridiculous likeness of herself, who always occupied the front seat of her carriage,—the mother was at the moment in vigorous health.

Nothing was talked of for the next week but the daylight party. A clear sunshiny day it proved,—just the weather for such an occasion. Mrs. Irving and her friend Mrs. Seaton, wrapped in \$1000 cashmeres, in Mrs. Seaton’s open carriage; Belle, Dr. Theodore, (her brother,) Harry Vane, and Violet in Mrs. Irving’s stylish equipage, drove from the door of that lady’s brown-stone mansion in Walnut Street, an hour later than that named in the card. The delicious brisk air of early spring; the leaves just out of bud, of every shade of tender green,—beautiful, and welcome, after the long winter, as summer flowers; the birds twittering, and the speed with which they flew over the smooth turnpike, (Mrs. Irving’s superb bays were fast trotters,) excited Violet’s spirits.

Wrapped in her becoming opera cloak, her dress gathered carefully around her, to prevent, if possible, its being tumbled, Belle reclined gracefully in the cor-

ner of the carriage, twisting the tassel of her fan, in a semi-oblivious state; Vane, opposite, quite as silent, and even more preoccupied. Theodore alone responded to Violet's lively sallies, by a pleasant laugh,—a very good laugh he was, though seldom originating mirth himself. The Doctor possessed no distinguishing individuality, unless, indeed, a remarkably well-shaped hand and brilliantly white teeth.

"Are you alive, Belle?" and by way of testing the fact, Violet administered a wicked little pinch.

"Violet!" exclaimed Belle, in the tone of living and suffering mortality, and rubbing her arm, relapsed again into silence. Poor Belle was severely tried; a glimpse of a pretty cottage, a graceful tree, or a bird flitting past, and Violet's head was out of the window. Belle's every thought was centred in those exquisitely embroidered flounces, each additional crease an agony, and every time Violet moved she crushed them shockingly.

Colorless as the marble Venus in the drawing-room at home, her features as regular, and almost in as calm repose, Belle's face had but *one* expression. Love would never have "fallen asleep in the sameness of its unchanging brightness," though the fickle little god might very possibly have dozed, *ennuied* by its unvarying sweet placidity. There was nothing gay about Belle, not even her ribbons; hers was altogether the *subdued* style; her habitual smile, a ray of moonlight on the aforesaid marble Venus; the statue was good, the drapery perfect. Violet met angels, or the drollest, most amusing little elves, at every step, on the dusty highway of life; to Belle,—

"A primrose blooming on the river's brim, or at a cottage door,
A yellow primrose was, and *nothing more*."

Mrs. Seaton, the mamma, an ambitious, practical, managing woman, had as great a passion for party-giving as her diminutive, worn-out-looking spouse for footing up interminable lines of dollars and cents. The wife delighted in diamonds and camel's hair; the husband, in slipping on the old coat that hung on a nail behind his desk, in the counting-house; talking over the price of stocks, with cronies too unrefined to be introduced at his palatial home; smoking shocking cigars,—horrible long nines,—that would have been the death of his gentleman son; and spitting over the floor *ad libitum*. The trespass at home was sure to be visited with disgusted looks, and lamentations over velvet carpets. The only time that Mr. Seaton really felt the house belonged to him, was when the family were summering it at Newport, or some other watering place. Whenever a party was to come off at home, discovering latent symptoms of gout, the Doctor prescribed colchicum, and ordered papa to bed. Shrewd as money-making, the old man understood the prescription perfectly, but obeyed it to the letter. He would rather have kept his bed a month; rather swallowed strychnine, ratsbane, or corrosive sublimate, than, dressed in his Sunday's best, assisted his queenly wife and elegant daughter in receiving the *eight hundred*. Once, and *once only*, he attempted it; but no sooner did the point-lace and diamonds come crowding in than, deserting his allegiance, the master of the house sneaked off into a corner, and, his shoulders up in his ears, with feelings very much akin to Miss Killmansegg's worthy papa's, began "washing his hands with invisible soap and imaginary water."

Vane's figure was commanding; his face agreeable rather than handsome; yet it won upon you, for the fore-

head and eyes were *spirituelle*; the nose refined, poetical; and the mouth abounding in varied expressions. His rich voice at times indicated unusual firmness; at others, gentle, almost to womanly tenderness; children sought his caresses; the criminal at the bar quailed before the lawyer's keen, honest glance.

As he leaned back in the carriage, his arms folded on his broad chest, his lips firmly compressed, and his brows almost meeting, his thoughts were wandering back to the time when, merry urchins, he and Violet romped together at Moss Bank, (his mother's country place,) or, seated side by side on the grass under the old elm on the lawn, read fairy tales from the same book, the wind blowing her curls in his face and her own eyes. Child as he was, he loved her even then, and she loved him too, though she smiled and pouted when he called her his little wife. The collegian, though the feeling at heart remained the same, altered the term of endearment to *sister*. But a "change had come over the spirit of their life's dream." His mother was dead, Moss Bank rented to strangers, and Violet, cold to him, flirting desperately with one who did not appreciate, and never *would*, never *could*, love her as *he* did.

CHAPTER II.

DEATH had so frequently darkened Mrs. Ives's dwelling, that nothing now was left to fear; the loved, the bright, the beautiful, were in the grave! the next shaft would unite her to them.

Yet lonely as she seemed, there were two, at least, who would deeply mourn her loss; and very dear were Meta Gray and Ernest Clayton to the excellent widow. One came to her heart, in the ordinary way of school friendships, beloved as the chosen companion of her son; the other, a self-breveted niece.

Classmates, sitting at the same form, the boys made friends, as the children say, at once. Ernest was soon after attacked with inflammatory rheumatism; and Albert, wretched lest he might lack the tender and vigilant care which ever soothed his ill bed,—“O father,” he said, the tears springing fast to his eyes, “the rheumatism may fly to his heart, and he may die in a moment, as Tom Villars did.

Mr. Ives rang for a servant. “Call a carriage,” he said; “I will go with you, Albert, and bring him home; we shall do all we can to save him from such a fate.”

Fortunately, Ernest was in a condition to be removed. Mr. Ives brought him home, took him up stairs in his arms, and kind Mrs. Ives nursed the ill boy as if he had been her own son; and a son he seemed to them from that day. Intimate with the Irvings, though living opposite, the Grays visited the Iveses but rarely.

Meta's mother died when she was but six years old. At first, every one thought the father a pattern widower;

but his tears dried ; the bowed shutters were thrown open ; occupied with business, his club, dinner-parties, and receiving company at home, (Gray's suppers were the pleasantest in Philadelphia,) the widower found little time to devote to the nursery. True, before quitting the house, he looked in for a moment upon his little girl and saw that she was well cared for: a romp, a kiss, and papa was gone!

In the interim, very lonely was the poor child, while Betty (the nursery maid) was flirting with the gentlemanly waiter in the kitchen or gossiping with the cook next door, and, taking her favorite doll in her arms, Meta slipped away from her and ran across the street to play with Helen Ives. Helen was learning to read; her mamma made the lessons very pleasant for her. Meta volunteered to join the class; became a promising scholar and confirmed runaway! One by one her toys found their way into Helen's cheerful nursery; and soon Mrs. Ives's was as much Meta's as Helen's home.

Mr. Gray made no objection to the arrangement; Meta amused him with her prattle at the only time he found it convenient to see her. When he was not at home, she was better at the Ives's than with the servants. The Ives's were ridiculously religious; but the child was too young to be indoctrinated into their insane notions: a good family, she would not make any improper acquaintances at their house.

Had a blind, aimless chance, led those children thither? The inmates of the old house (it was a quaint old house, draped with ivy vines) thought not. Viewing each event of life as directed by Him who spake the world into being, yet notes the fall of a sparrow to earth, *Mrs. Ives* and her excellent husband felt that two more *young immortals* were added to their responsibilities.

Boarding-schools are seldom training-places for heaven. Mr. B. professed to prepare his pupils only for college. Dressed in a forty-dollar robe, and covered with a profusion of costly lace, Meta's parents, in presenting her to God in baptism, promised "she should renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and be a faithful soldier of the cross unto her life's end;" wrapped the sleeping babe in its superb French cloak, and ere they reached home forgot the solemn vows made in her behalf. In truth, they never felt their import; the words were a part of the ceremony of giving the infant a name.

Meta was a very pretty child, and, when old enough to behave decorously, exquisitely dressed, was taken to church,—something to be admired, envied,—as mamma wore her French bonnet,—and amused herself playing with mamma's fan or embroidered pocket-handkerchief; or, her head on papa's shoulder, slept through the service, as such darlings have the extraordinary talent of doing, without displacing one of her pretty curls. The Grays had a horror of genteel and vulgar children being mixed up together at Sunday-schools. The tiresome service over, Sunday was as any other day to Meta, who, up to the time she breveted herself Mrs. Ives's little niece, was as ignorant of her duty to God and her neighbor as if, a dweller in an African jungle, she lived beyond the sound of the Gospel.

Sir Walter Scott, speaking of parental affection, says beautifully—

"Is there a tear so limpid and so meek
It would not stain an angel's cheek?
'Tis that by a pious father shed
Upon a duteous daughter's head."

There is yet another, perhaps even more unselfish pleasure that Mr. and Mrs. Ives experienced, when they saw the good seed, prayerfully sown, springing up and bearing fruit in the minds of these dear children. One morning Meta came over, looking very happy:—

“Aunty,” said the artless little creature, so soon as she had embraced Mrs. Ives and Helen, “I was mad with Betty last night, and I did want to slap her.” Mrs. Ives looked distressed. “Oh, but I didn’t,” she replied to the look. “I remembered Cain killed Abel—poor Abel—in a passion; and I went by myself and prayed God to take the passion out of my heart; and when it was gone, I was very glad I didn’t slap her. Presently after, they cried fire, and the engines came tearing by, and I begged her *hard* not to leave me; but she would; she ran right down stairs, and I was so frightened that I cried, and covered up my head in the bedclothes; but I said the prayer you taught me, Aunty,—‘O God, my heavenly Father, who seest in darkness as in the light, keep me safe under the shadow of thy wing,’—and I wasn’t a bit afraid; I took off the covering and looked about, not in the dark corners, though, (Meta was very truthful,) and went to sleep, and never knew *when* she came up.”

Thus exemplifying, by her infant experience, that religion “is good for this life as the life to come,” beautifully adapted to our daily wants, weaknesses, and temptations, “a present help in time of need,” to the babe of a few short summers, as to the age-stricken, tottering on the brink of the grave.

The children are grown up. Ernest Clayton, in Europe studying the old masters, having selected the charming though unlucrative profession of an artist;

Meta, in New York, where she has been some months with her father, who is there on business.

I know not if it be so with others, but to *me* inanimate objects have a language that addresses itself as directly to the heart as the stranger face whose mournful expression elicits our sympathy, all unconscious of the cause of unhappiness. Mrs. Ives's house impressed me with a vague feeling of sadness ere I knew aught of her history. The huge willow, too, drooping low, and seeming to shrink from the stars twinkling down upon it as a mourner turns away in his sorrow from a joyous face, appeared to partake of the grief which, I felt convinced, by a sort of intuition, was saddening the time-stained dwelling. House and tree look pretty much as they did when Ernest and Meta were children.

The brick wall around the garden, more dingy, perhaps; and of the garden, nothing now remains but one or two giant box, and a few sickly rose bushes. The ivy, year by year clambering higher and higher, not only covers the south gable, but has straggled up to the top of the clumsy stack of chimneys, and, indeed, above them.

The droll, hump-backed dormant windows, and old brass knocker,—a frowning lion's head, polished by a century's neat housekeeping into the most comic expression; arched windows, and that dark recessed door, the paint cracked into a fine network of seams and crevices, like the rind of a cantelope, look more antiquated than ever, surrounded as it is now by *bran-new* brown-stone houses. Glancing around him in Philadelphia, one involuntarily echoes Cheiver's wish,—“Would that, in this day of change and passion for novelty, men would leave a few stones for moss to gather upon!”

Little as the exterior has changed, the footprints of Time are even more apparent there than in the interior. Carpets will wear out, but the old have been replaced by others so similar, it is doubtful if Mrs. Ives herself remembers they are not the same she found on the floor when she came to the house a bride. With this exception, like the enchanted palace in fairy tales, spell-bound by the lengthened slumber of a thousand years, everything remains as of yore.

The prim family portraits hang in the self-same places on the panelled walls; the tall mahogany clock ticks behind the door; the silver-branch candlesticks retain their place on the mantelpiece, flanked on either side by blue and white India china flower-pots; the tiles, picturing forth the story of Joseph and his brethren, still line the cavern-like fire-place, in which (Mrs. Ives is one of the chilly) a bright hickory fire is now burning, popping out and scorching the carpet, as hickory always does. The judge, in powdered wig, seems smiling down from his place above the mantelpiece at his daughter-in-law for starting up with that frightened look to stamp out the spark on the rug, while that on the hem of her dress is burning a hole in her best bombazine. There's something genial, very pleasant and companionable in a bright blaze like that sparkling and crackling away. Mrs. Ives, her elbow on the arm of the great wide low chair,—rolled up to the rug on which pussy, stretched at full length, is purring her content,—her cheek on her hand, seems to be enjoying it as much, as she sits there watching the warm glow now lighting up the room, now dying out, and anon wavering again over the pictures, the old-fashioned furniture, and those blue and white tiles, so clean and glistening. How the blue men, blue

sheep, and great blue tears, large as sugar-plums, pelt-ing down, or rather standing forever still on the good Joseph's cheeks, used to amuse Ernest!

A carriage has stopped at the door; Mrs. Ives hears it, and, hastily rising, goes to the window, puts aside the curtain, and shading her eyes with her hand, looks eagerly out into the darkening street. A young girl springs from it, runs up the steps, and grasps the old lion's head. How the brass beast grins and glistens in her small gloved hand, as the light from the street lamp glances upon it! Jane was lighting the gas, but, with the burning allumet, in her hand, is off to the door; she will be the *first* to see Miss Meta; and old Mary, staid old Mary, forsaking the waffles, (every one in Philadelphia has raised waffles for a social tea,) comes hobbling rheumatically from the kitchen to welcome the dear child. Poor Mary is suffering from *agetism*; but the old woman persists in calling it rheumatism, and, deaf as a post, always says "she has taken cold and *does not just now hear very well.*" Another moment, and Meta is in Mrs. Ives's arms.

"How *natural* everything looks," said the affectionate girl, wiping the tears of joy from her rosy cheeks, and smiling round as she paused a moment at the parlor door.

Mrs. Ives resumed her arm-chair by the fire, and Meta went to the table, peeped into the little work-basket, glanced over the books, threw herself for a moment into the quaint old chairs, as if to say "how do you do" to them, and ended by drawing towards her a low stool, upon which she seated herself at Mrs. Ives's feet,—putting up her pretty little mouth for another kiss.

"God bless you, darling!" and as she spoke, Mrs. Ives bent down and kissed not only the lips, but the white forehead; and smiling down upon her the old sweet

smile, passed her hand caressingly over Meta's head, as she used to do when a little child she sat there playing with her doll, and said, "Come, Meta, tell me all about your long visit."

"Oh, puss! how do you do?" Meta had just spied the old tabby, and hugging her, took her on her lap; and playing with her soft velvet paws, stroking her old play-mate, paused every now and then in her animated account of things and people, to whisper some endearing epithet to the drowsy creature.

Leaving them to ask and answer questions, we follow Mr. Gray to his club, whither he went on setting Meta down at Mrs. Ives's.

Enter with me a large, well-lighted, handsomely-furnished apartment, in which are a number of gentlemen playing chess, or by twos and threes walking up and down the room smoking; a few passing round from table to table, watching the different games; those rather apart from the rest, lolling in chairs, easy and yielding as the principles of the occupants; one an infidel, the other a universalist, are Gray and Andrews, the best players in the club. That is Gray worrying his whiskers, as if he held them responsible for his extraordinary blunders. What can the man be thinking of, running his fingers through his hair in that perplexed, *distract* manner? Andrews is no match for him. What a tug! if he carries any of those cherished whiskers home with him, it will be a mercy. Was there ever *such* a move? The tyro behind his chair, elevating his brows, laughs outright. The genius who achieves five games at a time, blindfold, and Hoyle himself, king of chess players, would be beaten if they allowed their minds to run riot thus. Gray scarcely glances at the board. Edmund P. Gray,

Esq., with all his shrewdness, has been checkmated in the game of life, and by a *woman*. He is not thinking of the present, but studying out his next move on that board where, unhappily, mistakes are seldom retrievable.

"Checkmate!" cried Andrews, in a tone of extreme exultation. It was no trifling or common triumph to beat Gray. Starting at the murmur around him, rubbing his eyes as if but half awake,—

"An *accident*, Andrews; I'll take my revenge to-morrow night," he said hurriedly, rose, bowed, took his hat and quitted the house, muttering to himself as he bent his steps slowly homeward, "I was an idiot not to have foreseen *this*; I might have known she would make the child a *fanatic*."

But instead of turning the corner, he proceeded on to Walnut Street. A thought had occurred to him; he would ask Mrs. Irving's advice; and, somewhat relieved, Mr. Gray hastened thither. Mrs. Irving was at home, very glad to see him, listened attentively to his grievances, and, thinking the matter over a moment, observed,—

"Extremely vexatious; I am not in the least surprised at your being annoyed. Ridiculous! a beautiful girl wasting her time teaching Sunday-school, and sewing for Hottentots, who find it a greater luxury to dispense with clothes than to be frocked and pantalooned as our scape-graces are. Some one called upon me the other day with a subscription to an orphan house at Cape Palms; but I knew the cannibals would be eating their wives to get their children into a nice home, and have them fed and clothed free of cost and trouble, and so to prevent increase of crime,—legislating for them all the way in America,—I refused my name to the *deluded* female;"

and Mrs. Irving laughed as if she had said something witty.

Handsome women may talk nonsense with impunity. Mr. Gray laughed too, and really thought her quite bright.

"Think of Meta's refusing to go to the opera," said the father, anxious to bring her back to the subject.

"Really; did she not go *once* while you were in New York?"

"No; nor could I coax her to a ball either;" and the unfortunate father looked perfectly inconsolable.

"Absurd!" and Mrs. Irving's tone had a world of scorn in it; but, changing her manner, she quickly added, with an encouraging smile, "I'm sorry for you; but have patience; when a girl is pretty as Meta, these fancies are not apt to last; join us at Newport this summer, and I think I can promise that she will not scruple to go to balls and the opera next winter."

Thus ended the conference; the conversation flowed into the gossip of the hour, and, after a pleasant visit, Mr. Gray took leave, and returned home in a hopeful mood, satisfied that Meta *would* be a *belle* in spite of Mrs. Ives's preaching.

Meanwhile the daughter had confided to Mrs. Ives the little altercation which had taken place between her father and herself in New York, and her apprehension lest, disgusted by the strictness of her views, he would be more inimical than ever to religion. Mr. Gray, as I before stated, was not a believer in revelation. I should have said an infidel, but the present style is to *soften* terms; for instance, in polite parlance, a *thief* is a *defaulter*, a liar an exaggerator. More agreeable to the ear, undoubtedly, but *sadly* pernicious to principle.

"Dear Meta, there is not a greater or more fatal delusion than the hope of winning others to piety by our own unfaithfulness," remarked Mrs. Ives gently. "I have seen it tried over and over again with the same ill success. *Strictness* of views, my child! The world is infinitely stricter; it demands *perfection* of the Christian."

"But, Aunt, Mrs. Belmont and Mrs. Armentage go to balls and the opera; they are communicants; can they be pious?"

"Hold, my dear. 'Who art *thou* that judgest another man's servant? to his own *master* he standeth or falleth!' 'Thou shalt not judge,' is as decidedly a commandment as 'Thou shalt do no murder.' We cannot examine ourselves too strictly, darling; but, unable to scan *motives*, we must leave *others* to Him 'unto whom all hearts are open,' and strive to cultivate that blessed charity which thinketh no evil. Your argument to your father was sound reasoning. If, to please him, you deliberately commit what you believe to be a sin, there is no telling into what guilt you might be hurried, were the temptation sufficiently powerful. Men oppose pride of family, careful education, and honor, as barriers to temptation; but look at the frightful, humiliating defalcations daily occurring, until really a term, so constantly applied to individuals who have heretofore sustained high positions, has almost ceased to be considered a *disgrace*. The All-wise better understood human weakness, when, in a short prayer given to his disciples, he made one of its few petitions, '*Lead us not into temptation.*' By the way of temptation, I am truly thankful to find Ernest has returned with his views confirmed rather than weak-

ened, by the ordeal of life abroad. "How do you think he is looking?"

"Quite handsome and Parisian;" and Meta blushed. "I never was so surprised as when Ernest walked in this morning." The clang of the old lion's head announced a visitor. "Talking of——" said Meta, as Ernest entered——

"Of angels, and saints will appear," paraphrased the artist, shaking hands. "I am so happy to be back in this dear old room again;" and Ernest looked round him with a pleased smile, as he drew his chair up to the fire, roasting, because they roasted; to judge from the flushed cheeks of the young people, it was too warm for both of them. "After hurrying up and down the world, and being knocked about in a strange land, among people as strange, it really does my heart good to find myself once more in this cozy room, where every table and chair is an old friend. It seems to me I have read through the book of life, and turned again to the title-page. My heart is all in a flutter; only feel;" and Ernest took Meta's hand ere she was aware of his intention, and laid it on his beating heart, gently pressing it as he held it there. Meta struggled to release it; the fire burned her face dreadfully.

"If there's not puss!" and, springing to his feet, Ernest caught up the cat, with—"I really have often been so homesick, that if Mrs. Tabbatha had walked in when the fit was on, I would have kissed you, pussy, notwithstanding your whiskers," and he gave them a tug. Whereupon Mrs. Tabbatha dug her claws into his hand. "*You wretch!*" and Ernest flung her from him.

"Oh, Ernest!" and Meta ran to her, and looking hurt, as if she, instead of their old playmate, had been sent

flying half across the room, took her in her arms, gathered her close up to her, and patted and pitied the pampered animal until Ernest wished himself a *cat*.

The artist was one of those who look stylish and well dressed in whatever they put on; merry and unaffected, and intelligent as light-hearted; an enthusiast in art; a student of character, graphic and humorous in his description of scenes and places. The clock tolled hour after hour unnoticed. Ernest had so much to tell, Mrs. Ives and Meta so much to ask, they were not half through when Jane entered with the unwelcome announcement "that the carriage had come for Miss Meta." So agreeably had the time passed, it was only by referring to the old truth-teller behind the door, they could believe it was eleven even then. Ernest denied the fact, and averring the clock had run down, put his ear close to listen.

"Oh, I hear it distinctly where I stand," said Meta, laughing, and gathering together her wrappers.

"Well, Time has folded his wings, and taken his evening at a bound," said Ernest, with a sigh. "What a precious ninny I have been, to waste three years studying marble divinities, instead of seeking inspiration from those glorious eyes!" thought the young artist, as he looked at the smiling face, shaded by the rigolette, while Mrs. Ives was fastening Meta's cloak. "Love casts a halo round the loved ones' head, deathless, immortal, till they *change* or die," sings Moore. Meta enjoyed the full benefit of the dazzling illusion. Ernest was *desperately* in love. A mouth that seemed formed but to utter kindness; her voice soft, sighing, cheerful, delicious,—a rich contralto; eyes with such depth of meaning, once seen, they haunted you ever after; how could Ernest escape? There was something, too, in Meta's thought-

ful countenance which induced the belief, young as she was, she had already partaken of earth's heritage of care; and it was curious to see, differ as they might in other respects, how this touching expression characterized all the creations of the artist. The chief figure in every group had Meta's eyes, Meta's sweet, pensive smile.

They are gone! and alone again with the old portraits. How dull and silent the parlor seems! and as Mrs. Ives glanced around, and thought how very different her life would have been, had her children been spared to her, with a rebellion unfelt in the hour of bereavement, "Lord!" she exclaimed, "why hast thou dealt *thus* with thy servant?" The temptation was momentary; her next thought—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not *all his* benefits; who forgiveth all thy sins, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness." Thank God, "*earth* hath no sorrow that *heaven* cannot cure."

* * * * *

To return to the party *en route* for the matinée. The two elder ladies, wrapped in expensive camel's-hair shawls; the good-natured Doctor laughing; Vane indulging in a mingled reverie of sweet and bitter memories; Violet provokingly restless; and poor Belle, victimized.

Willie, on the look-out for them, was at the carriage door to assist the ladies in alighting, and smilingly presented his arm to Violet in the most *matter-of-course* way; and, smiling back upon him, Violet took it *as a* matter of course. Vane thought the whole procedure extremely undignified on her part, and presuming in Ashton; and, in an ill humor, walked up the steps, leaving the elder ladies to be escorted by two of the *mana-*

gers,—*nice fellows, up to anything*,—leaving Theodore to assist his sister.

Dancing had commenced. Mrs. Irving's party was always the last everywhere. The mammas established in comfortable chairs, the young men and girls joined the dances.

"What an insufferable crowd! how hot it is!" Mrs. Irving fanned herself, adding—"Really, there is no depending upon what people say. Ashton assured Violet it was to be quite a select affair. I believe all Philadelphia is here."

"Philadelphia is very well dressed," replied Mrs. Seaton; "unique, is it not?" directing Mrs. Irving's attention to a most becoming head-dress, composed of imitation pearls, and delicate ostrich-plumes mixed with bows of scarlet ribbon, looped up with pearls and chenille, with a fall of blond lace.

"Those immense streamers kill the whole thing."

"You think so? now I like them; in *my* opinion, they are extremely stylish."

"Mrs. Vivain's is prettier," persisted Mrs. Irving. "That black velvet, wound round with gold cord and guimpure lace, with golden grapes and leaves at the side, mixed with those exquisite red flowers, is in better taste. Extravagant woman; she did not tell me she had received anything from France."

"O'Brian *must* hear *that*," said Mrs. Seaton, laughing. "I was with Emma when she bought it; mine is an O'Brian, too; is it not a love?—so graceful, so light, and, though perhaps I should not say so, *very becoming*; don't you think it is?"

"Everything becomes you, dear," was the smiling reply.

"You flatter;" and Mrs. Seaton tried not to look pleased. "Come, tell me of the wedding; I am not fortunate in timing my illness; my attacks of neuralgia are always most inopportune; Belle and Theodore were at the reception, but they have no power of description; all I could gather from them was, that it was quite an imposing tableau."

"Perfectly dazzling! Only imagine: the bride's necklace, eighty-seven diamonds in gold festoons; brooch, ear-rings, and ring to correspond. But her bracelet was the most superb thing I ever beheld: a massive gold rattlesnake, with glistening scales of diamonds sparkling like 'imprisoned sunshine;' on the top of the head a cluster of larger diamonds; the eyes brilliant rubies. It was a present from her father-in-law, and cost \$800. The lace on her dress alone was a fortune; think of Valenciennes flounces a quarter of a yard deep,—\$100 a yard! her pocket-handkerchief, point d'Alençon, of the most delicate embroidery, only a few inches of linen cambric in the centre. Her dress, white silk, brocaded with gold in a vine, and flowers."

"I saw that at the mantua-makers; but Belle says at the reception the crowd was so great her bust alone was visible."

"Margaret Linsay wore a scarf of point d'Alençon for which Stewart charged \$1500. Blanche's bertha, of point d'Aiguille, without ground, was a present from her father last Christmas. Emily's collar and sleeves, of flat point-lace with raised flowers, was quite as expensive. Poor girl! she coughs incessantly; I don't think she'll live through the winter. Ida's pearls were magnificent. By-the-way, have you heard that she's engaged to Frank Arlington?"

"Indeed! is she?"

"Yes; they are to be married in July, and—of all places in the world—go to Capon Springs for the wedding tour."

"Every one to her taste," replied Mrs. Seaton, elevating her shoulders the least bit in the world. "Her father is rich enough to indulge her, if she fancied to sentimentalize among the pyramids. His income is said to be \$10,000 a year. The wedding presents, I'm told, were most costly."

"Perfectly regal! Her mother gave her a gold tea-set: urn, tea and coffee pots, sugar bowl, cream pitcher, twelve cups, saucers, and spoons—the egg stand and spoons to correspond. A dinner-set of silver; crumb and pie knives, preserve spoons, fruit baskets, grape scissors, eighteen knives and forks, epergne, any number of waiters, and brooches, and bracelets, and ear-rings, and all sorts of costly things. The flowers with which the room and table were ornamented cost over \$300. One of the pyramids on the table, classic figures supporting the roof of a temple, \$50. I'll tell Violet she must resign herself to *old-maidism*; such a wedding and outfit would make us paupers!"

"*Poor* woman! we'll raise a subscription for you; I see you'll need it before long;" and Mrs. Seaton glanced to where Violet and Ashton were standing. Belle had been dancing, and, with her partner, joined them at the moment.

"If there's not Carry Simmons! Belle, I thought she was in deep mourning?" remarked Violet.

"She wore crape and bombazine but *six weeks*," said Belle, laughing; "she says she was not *intimate* with her aunt!"

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"Capital! six weeks is a long time to mourn for a person *nobody knows*. Is it certain that the Mrs. Fig-gins ever existed?" remarked Ashton.

Violet looked hurt. "I begin to suspect you are as heartless," she said, reprovingly.

"I *am* heartless," he whispered; and his look and tone gave a meaning to the words that made Violet crimson, and, looking down, she asked if he had ever seen Belle's caricature of her grandmamma and herself.

"Caricatured you, did she? No; what was it? An old mastiff holding a little pup under her paw?" and Willie tried not to laugh.

"No," answered Belle.

"O Belle, they were unmistakable," said Violet, with frank truthfulness; but the conversation was interrupted by young Murray, who claimed her for the dance.

"I see your dogs are out, Miss Carry;" and Sid. Smith, who was waltzing with Caroline Delmare, glanced at the party across the room.

"Pretty pup; it does not look dangerous;" and as she spoke, Carry advanced toward Violet and extended her hand. "How do you do, Violet?" she said, as if they had been on the most friendly terms.

Violet colored, and, with a gesture of extreme *froidueur*, bent her head in acknowledgment.

"You are too bad, Miss Carry!" said Sid., as they waltzed on.

"I'll be *badder* before I've done, see if I'm not!" replied Carry, defiantly; and, completing the circuit of the room, they were again beside Willie and Violet. Belle and herself had exchanged beaux. True to her threat, walking directly up to, and resting her arm familiarly on Violet's shoulder,—“Are you and Willie engaged?”

Carry asked, in a mysterious, audible whisper. Ere she had time to reply, Ashton's arm was around her.

"Have you rested, Miss Violet?" and they whirled off in the waltz.

"So Meta would not be persuaded?" observed Mrs. Irving, as Mr. Gray made his bow. Mr. Gray smiled a forced smile, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, Madame Irving, I am charmed to see you!" and hairy little Baron Von Rosentheldt, rushing up, extended his ungloved hand.

"An unexpected pleasure, Baron;" and Mrs. Irving shook hands most cordially. "I supposed you in the West slaying bears."

"Slay, Madame—slay?" repeated the Baron, extremely mystified. "Que ce soit; slay?"

"Murder, shoot, kill," responded Mrs. Irving; and, indisposed for a lesson in English, added, "Allow me to introduce my friend Mr. Gray. Mr. Gray, Baron Von Rosentheldt." The gentlemen bowed and shook hands.

"Rough sport, bear hunting," said Mr. Gray, addressing the pale, unmeaning blue eyes, and hooked nose, peering through the wilderness of beard.

"I like *Philadelfe batar*." The Baron's smile disclosed glitteringly white teeth—the creature *had a mouth*.

"What game did you find in the prairies, sir?" questioned Mr. Gray, with a desperate effort at conversation.

"*Prara, prara?*" echoed the Baron, again in the mist.

Deficient in the organ of language, if there be such an organ, Mr. Gray did not know a word of German, and possessed as little available French as the Baron did English. He wondered what the deuce women found so attractive in foreigners. Leaving Mrs. Irving to entertain the Baron; bowing to a dumpy, sallow little woman, with an

enormous diamond brooch, he asked Mrs. Fitzmaurice if she was disposed to *promenade*.

"Gladly; it is so stupid sitting still, looking at those horrid waltzes."

"A decided tease." After a few compliments upon her own charms, Mr. Gray fell into ecstasies about Mrs. Irving.

"Made up!" sneered the diamond pin.

"Her air is so noble."

"Why did not you say *aristocratic*, Mr. Gray?" queried the brooch, overflowing with envy. "John Saxe's advice to such *aristocrats* is, 'not to ascend the family thread, lest they

' Find it waxed at the farther end
By some plebeian vocation!
Or, mayhap, the boasted line
May end in a loop of stronger twine,
That plagued some worthy relation.'

Mrs. Irving's family thread is coarse enough, heaven knows. My mother remembers old Peter Brown's shop at the corner of Front and Market Streets; a miserable two-story wooden building. I'm astonished that people submit to her airs. A painter and glazier's daughter at the head of society, looking down upon those her father was glad to work for."

The granddaughter of the tallow-chandler, less fortunate than the glazier's daughter, had failed in her attempts to force her way within the cabalistic circle of fashion.

"I've been peeping behind extensive hoops and in all retired nooks for you this half hour;" and Dr. Seaton threw himself down upon the sofa, in the recess, by Vane, *as he added*—"Studying a case? You should leave law

in the office with Robert Doe and Richard Roe, when you come into society, Harry."

"Society!" replied Vane, with asperity. "Call you *this* society? this conglomeration of lace, feathers, and artificials? flirting women and baby beaux? Hard at work in the office all day, I am not in the humor to laugh at folly. I came here seeking relaxation, pleasant excitement. Asking, begging bread, and *society* gives me a *stone*! By heaven, a 'looker on in Vienna!' I've made up my mind to eschew society altogether. Seeing Lizzie Rayford, (who, by-the-way, I am very much surprised to meet here,) with some difficulty I managed to navigate my way through hoops and flounces to the corner where she and Laura Cranston were, but scarcely had I joined them, when Ned Redmund claimed Laura for the dance then forming. Now for a cozy chat, said I, appropriating Laura's chair; but instead of a pleasant confab about matters and things in general, Lizzie fell to *preaching*."

"Poor thing! her conscience hurt her for being mixed up with us sinners, I suppose; and she hoped by converting a *lawyer*, to cover a multitude of crimes, her own along with the rest," said the Doctor, laughing.

"She talks well, and told some pungent truths," continued Vane; "but," he added, in a disgusted tone, "when I looked at the preacher, tricked out in ball-room finery, I came very near being guilty of the impertinence of telling her, '*Physician, heal thyself*;' it vexed me; I really like the girl."

"Devoted!" and Theodore looked toward the door; Vane gave a quick glance, and turning very pale, and then as red, his brows knit and his features working, he reached up to the wreath around the picture-frame above

his head, broke off a branch, and struck it so smartly against his gloved hand that the floor around was strewn with the starry bells.

"The party is breaking up," he said rising; and linking his arm in the Doctor's the young men quitted the room in quest of the ladies.

Carriages driving to the door; hackmen smacking their whips; wheels locking; ladies shrieking; gentlemen scolding; an occasional oath in broad Irish, and the daylight dance was with the things that have been.

There was a small sociable at Mrs. Seaton's that evening. Lizzie Rayford was one of the party, and remained to the last. It was almost morning when, laying aside her gay trappings, she sat down to read her Bible. Drinking of the well of living water, yet sipping from the broken cistern, she enjoyed neither. Prayer and praise had become a dull round of formal observances. Gone was the peace which flowed from a sense of pardoned sin and acceptance with God. The fervor of the Royal Psalmist no longer awakened a glow of devotion in the divided heart.

"Would it were with me as in times past!" sighed the poor girl, as, weary and dispirited, her hands clasped together on the table before her, her head bent down upon them, she remained some time buried in thought. The first words her eyes fell upon when she opened her Bible were, "Son, give me thy heart." "An honest, *whole* heart," murmured the conscience-stricken girl. "Oh, that I had never allowed myself to be persuaded to enter 'the *debatable land*!' Partake in moderation! Have I not done so? Alas! small doses of poison undermine the constitution, and prove as fatal as the large. Go as a *missionary* into the world; benefit others by my influ-

ence: miserable sophistry. My inconsistent course has grieved many a kind Christian heart, but *who* have I benefited? What good have I effected in the gay world? Had Peter been praying with the disciples, instead of warming himself at the fire with scoffers, would *he* have denied his Lord? What have *I* been doing?

Had I, as a faithful missionary, spoken in those brilliant circles of the *crucified*, had I condemned the profane exclamations, reproved their extravagance, their insincerity, would they have borne with me? How could I, when *my own* dress was in keeping with theirs? It would, indeed, have been Satan reproving sin. By joining in their frivolities, I have proved to the world that the pleasures of religion did not satisfy me, or at least given it reason to conclude so; for, God knows, I was happier, oh! far happier, before I entered into this heartless dissipation. Weak minded! Yes, let them call me so; I am weak, contemptibly weak—mad—to fear the ‘world’s dread laugh’ more than the anger of God. *Fanatic Pharisee!* Do I shrink from a term of reproach when reviled, spat upon, wounded, scoffed at for *my* sins? My Saviour *died* for *me*! Ashamed of *thee*, O blessed Jesus! Were there no sorrowing to comfort, that my day should have been spent thus? no starving to feed, that I should squander money upon dress?” and with brimming eyes Lizzie gazed at the expensively trimmed silk lying on the sofa. “Suppose at this moment I was to hear the awful summons—‘Thou fool! this night is thy soul required of thee.’ God be merciful unto me, a sinner;” and in contrition and deep self-loathing, the tears coursing down her cheeks, Lizzie fell down upon her knees and offered herself body and soul to *Him* who shed *his* blood to wash away her sins; a consecration uncon-

ditional, entire, without reservation. The calm, the peace that filled the heart so long distracted by the vain attempt to serve two masters, must be experienced to be understood or appreciated.

The *matinée* was Lizzie's last party.

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True to her promise of doing all she could to assist Mr. Gray in eradicating from his daughter's mind the ridiculous notions instilled by Mrs. Ives, Mrs. Irving had Meta as frequently as possible with her; took her to drive, to concerts, and to make visits. She was passing the day there, when Mrs. Seaton and Belle came in,—the daughter calm and smiling as usual; the mother all in a flutter.

"How do you all do?" and nodding to Meta and Violet, and shaking hands with Mrs. Irving, Mrs. Seaton threw herself into the nearest comfortable chair, drew a foot-cushion to her, and, resting her French boots on it, said, with a fagged smile, "Excuse me, girls, I am too crushed and tired to shake hands; we've been securing bargains these hard times;" and opening a small package, she displayed a quantity of exquisite lace. "Belle, show Mrs. Irving the veils; perfect *loves*; quite as pretty as Mrs. Arlington's, that she gave \$100 for in Paris, for \$30 and \$45. By-the-way of bargains, I must read you Julia's letter; she says things are much worse in New York than with us," and Mrs. Seaton put her hand in her pocket. "I haven't it; I must have left it at home; I'm sorry, it was very droll; poor girl! she had well-nigh fallen a martyr to bargains. Some one, I've forgotten who, was selling off at ridiculously low prices, '*without regard to cost*,' as they say in the shop windows. So dense a crowd collected a square above

and a square below the store, the press around the suspended banks, from her account, was *nothing* to it. The police had to be called in to prevent the bargain-seekers from crushing one another to death. Julia says it was amusing to see elegantly-dressed, delicate females, with great bundles in their arms, forcing their way through the crowd. There was no 'sending home' that day; each purchaser was obliged to put forth her strength and be her own porter."

"Everybody seems to be failing and selling off," remarked Mrs. Irving, with a troubled face. "We shall have to import our dress and *et ceteras* ourselves, though I suppose, as the banks have suspended, so must *we*."

"Offer a premium, and no doubt some smart Yankee will discover Dominie Sampson's secret: his clothes, you remember, never wore out," said Mrs. Seaton."

"Oh, that is all very well for a novel, Mrs. Seaton, but"—and Violet held up her dress—"mine not only wear out, but *tear* out terribly; look here?" and laughing, she exhibited the demolished flounces.

"Oh, you own a black Golconda, dear. Coal is a buried treasure which can always be turned into cash," remarked Mrs. Seaton; "but I am a paper woman; to-morrow, this moment, for aught I know, I may be protested, gone to flinders, not worth a cent! There is no anticipating who will fail next; the world seems becoming bankrupt; thank heaven we shall be in *good* company; Russia and England, it is said, will soon be among the list; my husband talks of nothing but failing; I really believe the man's demented; I'm tired of my cashmere, and I wanted to get a new one for Belle, and when I asked him for \$2000 this morning, he absolutely refused, and raved about extravagance until he gave me

a headache. To camel's hair and diamonds, he says, we owe the ruin of the country; just as if men do not throw away thousands and tens of thousands on horses, and wine, and cigars, and such trash; besides dinners, clubs, billiards, *ecarté*, and various *et ceteras* never entered in account-books. His sympathies are so much roused in behalf of the working class. You must not be surprised to hear we have opened a soup house at No. — Spruce Street; I'm disgusted with the word *retrenchment*. He wants us to suspend desert, substitute mutton for game, and levy chintzes for brocades. It is perfectly absurd! His extravagant economy diverts me as much as my bargains annoy him. If this state of affairs continue, I shall certainly sue for a divorce."

"*Apropos* of extravagance," remarked Mrs. Irving, "our carpenter's daughter was at the opera last night, in an imitation cashmere, which could not have cost less than \$30."

"Oh, dress is quite a *disease* at present, an alarming epidemic. Belle came near being knocked down by a frowsy washerwoman, in immense hoops, carrying home a basket of clothes; her great red face almost hid by dirty flowers," said Mrs. Seaton; "and I think you said, Belle, highly perfumed with whisky?"

Belle gave a shuddering assent, and, turning to Violet and Meta—

"Think of our parading Chestnut Street in levy calicoes, girls!" she said, smiling her sweet moonlight gleam, and looking placid, as if resigning herself to some pleasant imagination.

"Papa thinks the times very alarming," remarked Meta, "and that the crisis is yet to come."

"Don't let him frighten you, dear," interposed Violet,

"about the crisis; men always talk so: I was *born* in a crisis, brought up in a crisis, and expect to die in a *crisis*; 'now a bubble bursts, and now a world;' but everything, as far as I can see, goes on the same for *a' that*;" and the pretty creature raised her shoulders the least bit in the world, and gave her head a coquettish little toss that became her exceedingly.

"What does Mrs. Ives say of the times?" inquired Mrs. Irving.

"That *He* who commands the storm is at the helm," replied Meta. "She fears no evil."

"Happy woman!" and Mrs. Irving's lip curled slightly. "I presume she does not bolt her doors at night?"

"Mrs. Ives is not a fatalist!" and Meta's color rose, for she was aware of the opinion the set entertained of her friend; she knew, too, the obligations Mrs. Irving was under to Mrs. Ives; but, commanding herself, she went on to say, with less asperity, "Mrs. Ives practices the advice of the good divine, who recommends that we *act* as though *all* depended upon our exertions, and leave the result to Heaven."

"I have scarcely seen her since Mr. Ives's death," remarked Mrs. Irving; "she is so taken up with the poor."

"She visits only the sick and afflicted," replied Meta, "though if you would call, I'm sure she would be pleased to see you; she often speaks of you, and most kindly; but you are very hoarse, Mrs. Irving?"

"Only a slight cold."

"Grandmamma is perfectly atrocious in her treatment of herself," said Violet, letting down the curtain at Mrs. Irving's back; "if there is a draft in the room, she always contrives to get into it."

"I shall be well enough to-morrow," coughed Mrs. Irving. "*Heavens*, what a sharp pain!" and she pressed her hand to her side.

"Grandmamma, you won't go to Mrs. Arlington's to-night?" Violet inquired in a tone of anxious entreaty. "Mrs. Seaton, do make her promise she won't."

"Indeed, I'll do no such thing; it's only a little dyspeptic twinge; I'll call for you at ten;" and, shaking hands, Mrs. Seaton and Belle made their adieus. But, returning to where Mrs. Seaton was standing, "I forgot to tell you, dear," she said, "poor Mrs. Deleville is perfectly in despair at the shocking reports about Sophy; it is really distressing to see her, poor soul; she is nearly frantic."

"Poh, poh!" said Mrs. Irving, laughing; "tell her to give a ball, have a full band, a sumptuous supper, and ask everybody; they'll all come, and, thus committed, will have to visit them afterwards; the reports will die out."

"Good-bye! we will talk it over to-night;" and, smiling, Mrs. Seaton hurried after Belle.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW days after the party, Mrs. Ives was surprised by a note from Violet. Mrs. Irving was ill, extremely ill, and entreated she would come to her *immediately*. The supposed cold *proved to be pneumonia*. Years of neglect and ingratitude were forgotten; the indulgent friend hastened to her. The street before the house was covered with tan; the bell tied up. John met her at the door, and Clemence, Violet's *quondam* nurse, was waiting to conduct her to the sufferer. Mrs. Ives was not superstitious or fanciful, but death seemed to have entered before her; the thick velvet carpet yielding to the tread, gave out no sound of footstep; as they ascended the wide stairs, the unnatural stillness of the gay house oppressed her; Violet met her in the entry.

"Excuse me," she whispered, choking back her tears, "but for Heaven's sake, Mrs. Irving, say nothing to alarm grandmamma; she is extremely *ill*, and *dreadfully* nervous."

Poor girl! pale and haggard, her eyes red and swollen with incessant weeping, and great dark circles around them, she was so unlike herself that Mrs. Ives hardly recognized her.

"I hope, dear, your fears exaggerate your grandmother's danger."

Violet shook her head despondingly, and, rushing past to her chamber, Mrs. Ives heard her sobbing as she closed the door behind her.

"Die! heavens! she *will not* die! Dear, dear grand-mamma!" and the poor girl walked about the room wringing her hands distractedly, repeating to herself "She will not die. God will not, Oh no, he will not, make me so miserable! so *very, very* wretched! *He* will not leave me all alone in the wide world!"

In all her dreams of prospective happiness, her dear grandmother was included; the *possibility* of her dying had never once crossed Violet's mind; they had never been separated, and she could imagine no life apart from her. No wonder the loving girl was almost crazed by the sudden, the overwhelming affliction.

To steal noiselessly into the darkened chamber, listen with sickening apprehension to the sufferer's labored breathing, peep at her through the half-closed curtains, and rush back to her room to give vent to an agony of tears, was Violet's life, since she suspected Mrs. Irving's danger. In vain the old French nurse, who loved her as if she was her own child, implored her to eat something. Loathing the very smell of food, she turned from it with disgust; although, to gratify Clemence, she forced herself to swallow occasionally a cup of coffee or a few mouthfuls of soup. Exhausted and worn out, if for a moment she threw herself on the bed, ere Clemence could close the curtains and let down the blinds, she was up again, pacing the floor, weeping bitterly.

Turning the knob of the door very gently, Mrs. Ives entered the sick room and approached the bed. Mrs. Irving was awake, and, putting aside the curtain, asked, in a feeble voice,—

"Is that you, Lucy? I am very ill!" and the eager, inquiring look said, "Oh, tell me, in mercy tell me, it is *not so!*"

But Mrs. Ives was too conscientious to give the slightest hope when death was stamped upon every lineament of the beautiful face: a deeper despondency overshadowed it as, finding Mrs. Ives did not reply, Mrs. Irving proceeded with—

“Dr. Morgan will not allow I am in danger; it’s his way; you know he never does. Afraid of alarming me, people tell me anything they think will quiet my nerves. But *you* will not deceive me, Lucy? Will you see the Doctor for me, and get his candid opinion? *Make* him tell you; *insist* upon it. Oh, Lucy, if I should die; to leave all we love and go we know not whither!” and Mrs. Irving, bursting into tears, hid her face in the pillows.

“That is the unhappy fate of the poor heathen, Annie; but, dear, to *us* hath not Christ said, ‘Where I am, *there* shall ye be also?’ The Christian ‘Hath a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens,’ and the blessed assurance that ‘It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the happiness’ awaiting him in that better land.”

“Yes, but I am not a Christian, Lucy; had my poor mother lived——But there is Dr. Morgan coming up stairs; take him in the dressing-room; *make* him tell you.”

With a sad heart Mrs. Ives obeyed.

“It is not for man heaven’s gate to close,
Or say how far the stream of mercy flows.”

But the Bible contains not *one* promise for an unrepentant death-bed. “Deeply has her cup been drugged, that she might seek the ‘living water, of which, if a man drinketh, he thirsteth no more forever;’ yet loathing, nau-

seating, she has emptied it to its bitter dregs!" thought Mrs. Ives, "and, alas! conscious demerit, the fear of punishment will avail nothing. The Devils 'believe and tremble!' Poor, poor Annie! will she have time, will she have grace to repent?" With these thoughts in her heart, Mrs. Ives confronted the jocular Doctor at the head of the stairs. He was evidently surprised at seeing her there, but before he spoke—

"This way, if you please," she said, shaking hands and pointing to the dressing-room; and, closing the door after them, asked him if he did not think Mrs. Irving alarmingly ill.

"She is very much alarmed about herself," was the evasive answer, "and there must be no sad faces around her; her friends must be cheerful as possible, and do all they can to raise her spirits; it is all-important she should not suspect you think her in danger."

"Doctor," said Mrs. Ives, solemnly, "dare you assume the responsibility of sending an unprepared soul into eternity?"

The hopeful smile, fixed as if a man of wood it had been carved in his face, faded as he replied, hurriedly,—
"I have not seen her since morning; I will be back again;" and he hurried from the room.

The Doctor was at his old tricks, but he could not elude Mrs. Ives; she was waiting for him at the dressing-room door, and beckoned him in as he was silyly slipping down stairs.

"How do you find her?" she anxiously questioned.

The Doctor hesitated a moment ere he replied,—
"Madam, I will be frank with you: her condition is unchanged; her heart and lungs are seriously affected; *she cannot live.*"

"It is, then, as I feared!" exclaimed Mrs. Ives, extremely shocked, notwithstanding her sad prognostics. "How long do you think she will linger, Doctor?"

"Six weeks, or possibly two months, if her nervous system could be got into a better condition; but this extreme agitation is killing her, and I warn you, Mrs. Ives, as any sudden accession may prove fatal on the instant."

"I shall endeavor to be prudent," replied Mrs. Ives, greatly distressed.

"Mrs. Ives," and Dr. Morgan drew a chair near that she had just taken, "you may murder her, but it is too late now to prepare her for heaven. I have seen too much of death-bed repentance to have the slightest reliance upon it. But a few weeks since, I witnessed a case in point: a young man who, up to the time of his illness, had never given religion a thought, believing he had only a few hours to live, bent all his energies to make his peace with God, and thought and talked of nothing else; his prayer was heard; he professed not only to feel his sins forgiven, but was in a most *joyful* state of mind. Madam, it was what is termed a *triumphant* death-bed. The poor mother, in her gratitude, forgot her approaching bereavement. But the hand of death was stayed. To our astonishment, the young man began to recover, and, strange to say, talked no more of religion; and when his mother referred to the subject, judge her surprise when he declared he had not the slightest recollection of the circumstance: it was the *hallucination* of *delirium*. Many persons infer, from a calm death, that all is well with the dying; but the physis has a great deal to do in such cases; the brain not unfrequently dies first; remedies tend to soothe; in nine cases out of ten, tranquillity is the result of ex-

treme bodily weakness. In my opinion, the only rational hope of happiness hereafter is that based upon a consistent, pious life."

"Such, then, is the result of your experience," replied Mrs. Ives.

"*Decidedly, Madam.*"

There was sorrow as well as reproof in Mrs. Ives's glance, as she said, "Doctor, may I take the liberty of an old friend, and ask what use you are making of this knowledge? What am I to think?"

Dr. Morgan colored and bit his lip, but instantly recovering his *sang-froid*, replied in his usual jesting way, "Think? my dear Mrs. Ives; why, that you and I are doing all the good we can, in our way;" and with his habitual smile he bowed himself out of the room.

In an agony of suspense Mrs. Irving awaited her sentence. Too weak almost to raise her head from the pillow to take nourishment, in her excitement she had started up in bed, drawn aside the curtain, and, her face flushed, her eyes dilated, she listened for the approaching footstep. The door opened: one look at the tearful, half-averted face, and the curtain dropped from her trembling hand; with a piercing shriek she fell back in a deep swoon upon the pillows.

Dr. Morgan, anticipating a scene, lingered on the stairs, and, hearing the shriek, hurried to Mrs. Ives's assistance: restoratives were administered, and, as soon as the patient was in some degree tranquilized, addressing himself to Mrs. Irving, and glancing reproof at her friend, he said, somewhat impatiently,—“You asked me just now when you would be well; by Jove, if you give way to this nervousness, Madam, you never will.”

“*I knew it, Doctor,*” groaned poor Mrs. Irving; “I

knew you thought I would *die*; I saw it the moment Lucy entered the room."

"You have remarkably fine eyes, Madam," responded the Doctor, cheerfully; "for aught I can tell to the contrary, you may bury us both;" and smiling, he bowed and quitted the room, believing in his heart she would not be alive that day week.

Encouraged by his manner, and lulled by the morphine, Mrs. Irving soon fell asleep. Mrs. Ives sat by the bed, watching her and praying for her. A slight rustle of drapery, and Violet stole softly in and stood for a moment looking at her grandmother; she was laying very quietly just then.

"She is better, she is not near so restless, and has a good color," whispered the poor girl, looking so happy, Mrs. Ives could not find it in her heart to destroy the fallacious hope; and Violet construed her silence into assent, as she glided through the door, closing it softly.

Mrs. Irving moved, her eyelids quivered, and tears trickled slowly down her hectic cheeks. Her first words on awaking were,—*"Tell me, what did he say?"*

"Why agitate yourself thus, dear Annie? doctors are often mistaken. Would it not be better to prepare for an event which, sooner or later, happeneth to *all*, and, when met in hope, is a blessing?"

"Great God!" gasped Mrs. Irving, "then he thinks I will *die*! I *knew* it as soon as I saw you! Yet, cruel man, how could he smile and be so cheerful if he thought so? He seemed most uneasy about my nervousness; people never die of that; I do feel very badly, very weak, but I am only nervous; don't you see I am?"

"Try not to give way to it, dear; endeavor to compose yourself, and redeem the time that remains."

"Compose myself! Lucy, you hear not the awful words ringing in *my ears*."

"What are they?" asked Mrs. Ives, fearing she was becoming delirious.

"Because I have called, and ye refused to hear; I stretched out my hand, and ye would none of my reproofs; I will *laugh* when your fear cometh," replied Mrs. Irving, wildly. "Oh, God, it has come!" she gasped out. "*It is upon me!* an angry God; an eternity of hopeless, endless woe," she continued in broken accents, wringing her hands, and bursting into tears. "What a prospect!"

The agony of spirit depicted on the face of the beautiful woman wrung the heart of Mrs. Ives, for she knew the proud woman, and that great indeed must be the mental suffering which extorted such acknowledgments. With difficulty she commanded her own feelings, as, alarmed at the agitation from which the Doctor prognosticated such fatal results, she hastily poured out a composing mixture and held it to Mrs. Irving's lips.

"Lucy," said the unhappy sufferer, "pain is nothing to what I am enduring; but I have that, too,—sharp, racking pains;" and as she spoke, Mrs. Irving pressed her hand to her forehead, her side, her chest. "I can hardly get my breath! What is to become of me? what shall I do?"

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," faltered Mrs. Ives, unable longer to restrain her tears.

"I do; I always have believed in Him."

"A historic faith, dear Annie. You believe that the *Word* was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and that *Christ the Son of God* was crucified for the sins of the

world; but a saving faith is an appropriating faith. Do you *feel* that *Christ* is *your Saviour*? and if you do, why are you so distressed?"

"The blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth* from *all* sin. That was the text which afforded my poor mother the utmost comfort on her death-bed," said Mrs. Irving. "I shall never forget her seraphic smile when, repeating it, she raised her eyes to heaven, and exclaimed, 'O death, where is thy sting?' But my life has been very different from hers. Like Ephraim I have been joined to my idols, and like him shall I perish."

"Oh no; our blessed Lord says, 'Whoso cometh unto *me* I will in no wise cast out.'"

"Too late, too late! there is no time to work now; the eleventh hour is almost gone."

"Suppose, Annie, you were at sea, had fallen overboard, were sinking, had sunk once, twice, and, when going down the third time, a stout swimmer, grasping you by the hair of the head, drew you from the waves; would you think you had saved yourself?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, dear, just so helpless is our condition; '*dead* in trespass and sins,' *Christ* must save or we *perish*! 'By *grace* are ye saved, not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.'"

"But we are commanded to *work* out our salvation with fear and trembling," said Mrs. Irving, who could not plead ignorance in extenuation of her neglect of duty.

"Why?" replied her friend. "'Because it is *God* who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.' Not that God will convert any one against their will. You remember our Saviour's touching lamentation over

the doomed city?—"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye *would not*.' Nevertheless are we to work, and, as an encouragement, are assured, 'Who-soever shall give even a cup of cold water in His name, the same shall receive a prophet's reward.' And again, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works do *follow* them;' observe dear, the works do not go before to open heaven to us, but follow to receive the promised reward. It is 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world for the remission of sin' who reconciles an offended God. The holiest life, the martyr's death, evince the Christian's sincerity, but give not the slightest claim to heaven. It is in the righteousness of the *Sinless* we must be clothed when we receive the blessed welcome, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' and remember, Christ died for *sinners*."

"Then have we nothing to do but to believe?"

"*Nothing*, so far as our *salvation* is concerned. We are saved by Christ *alone*, but we have *much*, very much to do in preparing for the enjoyment of heaven. If we accept salvation we *love* the Saviour, and Christ's test is, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' And again, 'Unless ye have my spirit, ye are none of mine.' Is it a light work to keep these commandments, to bring the stubborn will into subjection; an easy thing to be meek, and lowly, and long suffering? Annie, I believe *this* to be 'the *struggling* to enter in at the straight gate;' our good works the means of increasing the bliss of heaven, and the treasure we are to lay, up there 'Where moth doth not corrupt, or thief break through and steal.' We are told in Scripture, 'As one star differeth from an-

other in glory,' so will it be with the redeemed. By way of making my idea clear, if you will allow so homely an illustration, suppose I fill this wine-glass with water to the brim, it can contain no more; and this tumbler, each will be full according to its capacity; thus shall each be happy according to their capacity, as we are capable of being,—some large, some small vessels."

"But *I*? *I* have no good works to follow *me*," groaned poor Mrs. Irving. "Free as salvation is, it is not for *me*!"

"This is a stratagem of the wily adversary, dear Annie. Have you forgotten the prodigal son who wasted his substance? Did not the father see him afar off, and run to meet him? Is there not 'Joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth?' Hath not 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that those who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?' And does not our blessed Lord himself tell us, as if to meet your very state of mind, 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?'"

Mrs. Irving seemed deeply interested, and wept a great deal, and, encouraged, Mrs. Ives proceeded.—"Come in faith, as a little, loving, trusting child throws itself into its father's arms; come, and in the words of the humble Publican say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Urge the sinner's plea; no mortal man hath any other to lay before his God. Your *Redeemer* is to be your judge. Will He, think you, who died to save, be extreme to mark offences? Hear what he says: 'Whoso cometh to *me* I will in *no wise* cast out.' 'Ask and ye *shall* receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

Can there be freer, more unconditional invitations? 'Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and *I* will give you *rest*.' "

"Oh, Lucy! if I had only seen more of you," sobbed Mrs. Irving; "but your example condemned me, your exhortations irritated and made me uncomfortable, my own sophistries failed to satisfy me, and the only way to escape from the annoyance was to avoid your society."

"Why did I not know this sooner?" exclaimed Mrs. Ives, deeply affected; "had I suspected it, I would not have allowed myself to be refused; I should have come again and again, forced my way to you, pleaded with you to have mercy on your soul; but,"—and commanding herself by an effort, and speaking more cheerfully,— "we have done with the past; it is not ours; let us think of the present."

"Enfeebled in body and mind, racked with pain, and distracted as I am, I can do nothing," replied Mrs. Irving, in a tone of hopeless despondency.

"Annie, dear Annie, did our Lord bid the fishermen cast aside their coarse garments? He simply said, 'Follow thou me, and *I* will make thee fishers of men.' To Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, 'Follow thou me; and straightway Matthew arose and followed him.' We hear nothing of his collecting his money, or washing his hands, or changing his apparel. 'The leopard cannot change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin.' 'It is the Holy Spirit that calls, quickens, sanctifies, begins, and finishes the work of redemption,' Shall we beseech God to vouchsafe us that spirit?"

Mrs. Irving made a tearful assent, and, kneeling by the bedside, fervently did the excellent widow supplicate

God in behalf of the unhappy friend who had so long ceased to pray for herself.

Mrs. Irving would not consent to having a hired nurse. Poor Violet, perfectly unacquainted with illness, and distracted by anxiety, was altogether incompetent to render any assistance; her very presence in the room affected her grandmother so much that the Doctor prohibited her being there for more than a few moments at a time. Clemence had lived many years in the family, and, really attached to Mrs. Irving, would have been a very good nurse, had her *way* of doing things not been enough to try a saint. If she shook up a pillow, smoothed the bed-spread, stirred the fire, drew down a blind, handed a tumbler of water or a chair, or closed a door, the Frenchwoman's manner said distinctly to the recipient of the favor, "While *you live*, never forget the obligation." Poor Mrs. Irving, nervous and irritable, was completely overwhelmed. Mrs. Ives observed it, and kindly offered her services, which were most thankfully accepted, and, thus established by the death-bed, she had an opportunity of conversing upon the all-important topic whenever her friend's strength would admit of it. Violet, though deeply grateful for the excellent widow's unremitting kindness, disapproved altogether of the Bible readings, prayers, and long religious discussions.

"I am sure it is all this croaking that keeps grand-mamma so low and nervous," she would often say to Clemence, who, more *gesticular* than *wordy*, would shrug her shoulders, elevate her bushy brows, and reply with her peculiar under-breath chuckle, in broken English, glancing at Mrs. Ives, "*I vish* Madame fall *ovar*

something in dis room she keep so dark, and crasser her leg."

If the good widow cleared her throat, or sneezed, the malcontents flattered themselves it was a premonition of the prevailing influenza.

Meanwhile, in tremulous anxiety for her unhappy friend, she wrote bitter things against herself for what she considered her neglect of duty toward one so surrounded as Mrs. Irving was, by temptation; and it was fearful to hear the poor sufferer's confessions of a life-long struggle against powerful convictions; while at times, even now, seeming almost to blame God for not converting her against her will. Mrs. Ives strove to bring her friend to that true penitence which exclaims, "Against *Thee* only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou judgest;" to the self-abnegation which resigns itself into the hands of God, convinced, even should the soul perish, it would only suffer its deserts; and that love of holiness which extorted from St. Paul the strong exclamation, "*When* shall I be rid of this body of sin?" In short, to genuine contrition which is followed by Christ's being revealed in His fulness, and that sense of pardoning love, and spirit of adoption, which cries in the renewed heart, "*Abba Father!*" but all in vain. Poor Mrs. Irving's state of mind was rather "the fearful looking for of judgment, foretold as the doom of the scorner.

There is a vulgar old proverb which you may have heard during a summer's rustication, namely: "That bad wishes, like chickens, come home to roost." In this case it did not prove correct; the unkind wishes roosted on the old widow. Sneezing, coughing, and feverish, however, Mrs. Ives still kept faithful to her post, until Meta,

who called frequently to inquire after Mrs. Irving, finding her so unwell, insisted upon her going home and being nursed herself, and, after having seen her comfortably bestowed in bed, drove first to Dr. Morgan's, and then to the counting-house, to obtain her father's permission to remain with her until she was better. Amused at the idea of Meta's nursing, Mr. Gray queried what she knew about applying cataplasms and dressing blisters?

"I hope she will not require such cruelties," replied Meta, smiling. "But, papa, we all need cheering when we are ill."

The father, who had his reasons for wishing to keep the two apart as much as possible, affecting jealousy, replied, with an attempt at playfulness, "No, no, Meta; 'the bird that we nurse is the bird that we love;' you are too fond of Mrs. Ives already; I'll never get you home again."

Mr. Gray was standing on the curb-stone; Meta leaning down to him from the window of the low carriage. "Come in, papa, do come in, I wan't to talk to you;" and she opened the door as she spoke.

"No, thank you, bonnie lassie," said Mr. Gray, stepping back; "you'll begin kissing and crying, and carry your point. There, didn't I say so?" and, as he spoke, he peeped into her bewildering eyes as if he really saw the tears which, in truth, Meta could scarcely keep back. Light as was his tone, she saw that her father was annoyed, and, looking very sad, she said,—

"I am sorry, papa, she has always been *so kind* to me; if I was sick, she would not leave me night or day." Mr. Gray smiled incredulously. "Oh, papa, you remember when I had the measles?" and Meta's tears did

come then in a shower. Mr. Gray never could stand the sight of distress.

"Well, if you desire it so much, go for a day or two," he said, advancing to the carriage and kissing her; "but remember, you're not to sit up at night; promise me that; as it is, I'm afraid you'll be ill before the week's over."

"I will attend to your wishes, dear, good papa;" and Meta returned the kiss with interest, in her delight, thanking him again and again for the indulgence which she knew cost him an effort to accord.

It was a charming surprise to Mrs. Ives to have her dear Meta with her, though but for a day or two, and she declared it quite a temptation to continue ill. At first she seemed suffering only from severe influenza, and they had a nice time talking over so many things deeply interesting to both. Speaking one day of her lonely life, Meta told Mrs. Ives it distressed her to think she should be thus companionless, especially in long, dull, wet spells, and when, as at present, she was ill.

"Reach me that book on the table, dear, please," said the good widow, with a smile. "Thank you;" and, opening at a pencil-marked paragraph, she (handing it back to Meta) requested her to read it, and in her sweet, clear voice Meta read—

"Just as a mother, with sweet, smiling face,
Yearns toward her little children, from her seat
Takes this upon her knees, that at her feet,
And while from actions, looks, complaints, pretences,
She learns their feelings and their various will,—
To this, a look, to that, a word dispenses;
And whether stern or smiling, loves them still.
So Providence, high, infinite—
Makes our necessities His watchful care,


Harkens to all our prayers, helps all our wants,
And even if it denies what *seems* our right,
Either denies because it would have us ask,
Or seeming to deny, and in denying grants."

"With almost every tie to earth severed," said Mrs. Ives, when she had finished, "still my recreant heart, sending forth fresh tendrils, fastens on human love. Dear child, I often feel I love you and Ernest too much, and this tendency it is, perhaps, which has rendered the severe discipline I have suffered necessary. Perverse, rebellious, we often create our own misery. Besides, darling, you forget *this* world is not our abiding-place. We are but pilgrims and sojourners, hastening to a better land. To-day we pitch our tents; to-morrow, strike them, and are gone. Is it not folly, then, to grieve that the spot whereon we tarry that little moment be not fresh and green? the stream from which we slake our thirst, as clear and cool as we could desire? The important point, my dear, is, Whither are our footsteps tending?"

Meta smiled a tearful smile, and stooped down and kissed her dear resigned more than parent. Mrs. Ives smiled too, and gently patted the rosy cheek that rested for the moment on the pillow beside hers, and with the fond caress the conversation ended.

Mrs. Ives's disease proved to be pneumonia, and soon she was as ill as her friend. But there was no gloom in the darkened chamber of the old ivy house. Her thin hands clasped in silent prayer, a sweet smile on her fevered lips, calmly Mrs. Ives awaited the Angel of Death.

"How *precious* the assurance," she remarked to Meta and faithful old Mary, as they stood weeping by her bed, "that neither *heights* nor *depths*, nor principalities nor



powers, can separate us from the love of God in Christ. The waves of Jordan shall not overwhelm me, neither my strength fail me in the dark valley, for 'His rod and His staff' will support me! Darkness? there is no darkness where Christ is! Blessed Redeemer! I shall soon see him face to face, and join with angels and archangels in singing praises to the Lamb."

Her poor, too, were not forgotten, or Mrs. Irving. The little articles of nourishment her friend relished when she made them for her, prepared under her direction, were sent to her as regularly as if she was still her nurse; and Meta was often despatched on errands of mercy, with a request to stop and see how she was; and not unfrequently was the dear girl the bearer of a kind message or book, with a leaf folded down at the part the pious widow thought likely to rouse or comfort the dying woman.

Contrary to Dr. Morgan's prognostics, Mrs. Ives began slowly to recover. Old Mary was never tired of praising Meta's nursing.

One morning, having assisted Mrs. Ives to the sofa, tucked the silk comfortable nicely over her feet, arranged the flowers Ernest brought every morning when he came to see his aunty, as he called her, and placed the books on the stand by the sofa, Meta was going to read to her.

"Stop a moment, darling; won't you make some arrow-root custard for Mrs. Irving before you begin?" said Mrs. Ives. "Ring for the milk; you will find sugar and spice in the closet."

The milk, sugar, and a few blades of cinnamon were soon in the bright, old-fashioned silver porringer, and the porringer on the hot ashes, but boil it would not.

"Meta, the milk is simmering all away." said Mrs. Ives.

Meta took off the porringer, drew out more hot ashes, and set it on again in a fussy, restless mood, very unusual for her.

"It smokes," she remarked; "the fire is too far forward; do lay that front log on top."

Meta took up the tongs, but, before she could effect the suggested improvement, to her amazement, throwing off the comfortable, Mrs. Ives was at the chimney, and took the tongs from her.

As I said before, good Mrs. Ives was not without her weaknesses; one was this very passion for tinkering the fire. Her firm conviction that she could make a better wood fire (she never used coal) than any one else, with this innocent vanity uppermost in her mind, and exerting the little strength the pneumonia had left her, she drew out the under log, and as she did so down came the others, scattering the brands' ends over the hearth, sending the sparks, ashes, and smoke up into her face, and setting her to coughing fearfully. Blinded, she dropped the tongs and rubbed her smarting eyes; but, coughing and weeping, she seized them and set to work again. Little things serve to illustrate character. No one who saw the excellent woman battling with those refractory logs could doubt that, meek and subdued as she was, good Mrs. Ives *had a will of her own*.

"Something's on fire!" she said, stopping short in her labors, and glancing round; "I smell cotton burning."

"Mercy, it's your wrapper!" cried Meta, pale with fright.

"Don't come near me!" and, with more strength than one would expect from so fragile a being, Mrs. Ives

pushed her off, and strove to extinguish the burning dress, now in a blaze, by crushing it in her hands.

Completely beside herself, Meta rushed to the bell, gave a jerk that left the tassel in her hand, then ran to the door shrieking for Mary and Jane, then back to the wash-stand, and, seizing the pitcher, was about to drench Mrs. Ives with cold water, when Mary, hearing the cries, hobbled up in time to stay her hand.

"You'll kill her!" she said, taking the pitcher from Meta and setting it down on the floor, and, with wonderful presence of mind, caught up the rug and threw it around Mrs. Ives. "Lie down, lie down, Mam!" and the good creature, taking Mrs. Ives by the shoulder, forced her to the floor, and held her there until the fire was out.

Strange as it may appear, instead of its making her ill, Mrs. Ives seemed better for the excitement, and fortunately escaped with only a slight burn on her hand. To Meta's surprise, as soon as she was comfortable on the sofa, she announced her intention, provided the next day was mild, of sending for a carriage, and, wrapping up very warmly, to surprise Mrs. Irving by a visit.

The next day proved a very pleasant one, and, her hand enveloped in a pocket-handkerchief, Mrs. Ives drove round.


But imagine her astonishment, after toiling up stairs, which, weak as she was, was quite an undertaking, to find the Venetian blinds thrown back, window and bed-curtains gracefully draped,—in short, the chamber evidently arranged for visitors; her dying friend on the bed dressed most becomingly, looking like a galvanized corpse, and beside her, where the Bible used to lie, a *bouquet of hot-house flowers*. Mrs. Ives glanced around, and, overcome by her feelings, sank into a chair which

fortunately stood by the bed. Mrs. Irving divined the thoughts passing in the pious widow's mind, and a color, bright almost as that of health, for the moment dyed her hollow cheeks. The surprise so kindly planned was not productive of pleasure to either party. Mrs. Ives saw it, as, extending her hand, Mrs. Irving murmured her thanks. The all-absorbing subject which occupied them when they parted appeared to have passed altogether from Mrs. Irving's thoughts; she never once alluded to it, and effectually prevented Mrs. Ives doing so, by talking with such nervous rapidity that it was impossible to edge in a word, though Mrs. Ives made several attempts. The syren Hope was chanting her dulcet strains in the ears of the dying woman, and she would listen to nothing else.

Dr. Morgan, it seems, now only visited as a friend. Mrs. Irving was trying Homœopathic treatment, and, fancying herself almost recovering, spoke of going to Europe in the summer. A gentle tap at the door, a rustle of silk, and pretty Mrs. Vivian swept in. All hope of serious conversation was now at an end, and, with a sorrowful glance at her infatuated friend, Mrs. Ives rose to go. Mrs. Irving understood the look, a crimson blush proved it.

"God have mercy on you!" whispered Mrs. Ives, when she kissed her at parting. "Oh, Annie, have mercy on yourself ere it be too late!"

The hand that held hers trembled. Mrs. Irving was not altogether lost to feeling. Mrs. Ives thought of their schoolgirl days; she thought of the dying hour; and, with her heart and eyes brimful, she bent down again, and impressing another kiss upon the parched lips, she said, in a tone audible only to her infatuated friend,



"Annie, dear Annie, I shall pray for you," and hurried from the room.

"I'm glad she's gone; she's so good, I'm afraid to speak before her," Mrs. Vivian remarked when Mrs. Ives was out of hearing.

Not so Mrs. Irving; uncomfortable while she remained, she wished Mrs. Ives away; but when she was gone, all hope of heaven seemed to have gone with her, and she would have given the world to have her back, to be alone with her again, if but for a half hour, to get her to pray with her, to ask, oh, so many questions which had not occurred to her till then. But politeness prevented her expressing her feelings; and, imputing her preoccupied manner to lassitude, the lively lady rattled on, and, after listening awhile to the well-told gossip, Mrs. Irving thought perhaps it was as well that it had happened so.

"Doubtless you've heard the shocking *on dit* of Mrs. Green and the Baron?"

"Not a syllable."

The scandalous tale took some time in the telling. Mrs. Vivian had an engagement at two o'clock; it wanted but a few minutes of the time, and she was hurrying away, when Mrs. Irving called her back to say she would find a card at home for Wednesday evening, Violet's birth-day.

"The poor child has been immured so long in a sick room she begins to look quite faded," said, or rather gasped Mrs. Irving, exhausted by talking; "and as I am so much better, I have insisted upon having a few friends in the evening."

"You will not venture down stairs?" inquired Mrs. Vivian, looking her surprise.

"Oh, yes, I am quite well—only weak." Poor soul!

she had scarcely strength to speak. "You must not fail us, dear; Violet is fagged to death, and you see I am incapable of the least exertion."

"You may depend upon me," responded Mrs. Vivian; "I always enjoy myself more here than anywhere else. Of *course* you'll have the Baron, and Nora Green, too? Shut up as you are, you're not expected to be *au fait* of people's naughty doings. It will be amusing to see how they will conduct themselves before the world. Should they have the grace to blush, however, we shall never discover it through Dora's rouge and Van Rosentheldt's hair;" and, wafting a kiss to the invalid from the tips of her gloved fingers, the gay lady, with a light laugh, tripped down stairs, saying to herself, "The woman's mad; she's dying fast as she can."

* * * * *

The drawing-rooms were lighted up, the company began to arrive, the street door bell was constantly ringing, but, reclining languidly in her luxuriously cushioned chair, Mrs. Irving had not the energy to commence dressing.

"Turn the glass, Clemence," she said feebly, "so that I can see myself." Clemence obeyed. "Heavens! I'm a perfect horror; pale as a ghost, and so emaciated!" she exclaimed, when she caught a full-length view of herself in the cheval glass. "I'm not fit to be seen; I can't go down; you must receive, Violet, and make my excuses."

"No, dear grandmamma, my birth-day must be spent with you; I would not enjoy myself at all without you; nobody would. If you're not well enough, I'll tell John to say so at the door."

"If I was only dressed!" murmured Mrs. Irving, resting her head against the chair.

"We will make your toilet in a trice, if you allow us, grandmamma. Can't we Clemence?"

"Oui, Mademoiselle;" and, supported by Violet, the little Frenchwoman slipped on the elegant cinnamon-colored bayedere robe with black velvet stripes.

"Sit down, now, grandmamma," said Violet, assisting her tenderly, as if she had been an infant; "it is so long, you need not change your slippers; your feet are not seen, and if by any chance they are, Queen Victoria, I am sure, has not prettier. Clemence, the cap."

Setting the coquettish head-dress far back on the poor drooping head, and confining it with a couple of pins, (tiny birds of paradise of filigree gold and precious stones,) Violet smoothed the blond lace, drew it and the pink roses closer to the faded cheeks, stepped back a few paces, gazed fondly at her grandmother, and added, with a sad smile,—

"Beautiful Mrs. Irving! Clemence, doesn't she look like herself?"

"O! oui, Madame; été toujours belle, toujours aimable," replied the Frenchwoman.

"The roses give a sweet tinge to your cheeks; but they are pale—too pale, dear grandmamma; you want fresh air;" and, hanging affectionately over her, Violet laid her own cheek, paling through anxiety for her, for a moment to Mrs. Irving's, kissed her again, and, wrapping the scarlet camel's-hair shawl carefully and becomingly around her, Violet on one side and Clemence on the other, Mrs. Irving descended the stairs.

As she looked at her grandmother reclining gracefully on the sofa, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright-

ened by feverish excitement, Violet was more than ever convinced that the projected trip to Europe was all she required to restore her to her wonted health.

Mrs. Vivian occupied a part of the sofa with Mrs. Irving, the Baron hanging on an arm of the sofa, and Mrs. Green on a low lounging chair in front of them. They were laughing heartily at something Mrs. Green had said, the Baron excepted, who, mystified as usual, was imploring Madame Irving would be kind enough to translate for him,—when, suddenly, a strange, dull, fixed look came over Mrs. Irving's face. Deathly pale, her head sank on her breast. The Baron hastened in quest of a tumbler of water. Mrs. Vivian began fanning her. Mrs. Seaton, who considered the party a dangerous experiment, and was anxiously watching the invalid, hastened to her.

"She has fainted," said Mrs. Green.

"Good God, she is dying!" cried Mrs. Seaton, in a tone of horror. "Theodore, Dr. Morgan, come here!"

Everybody crowded round the sofa. Violet was in the next room engaged in earnest conversation with Willie Ashton; but, attracted by the commotion, and supposing that, overcome by the exertion, her grandmother had fainted, she ran in. The persons around the sofa made room for her; and, shocked at the expression of her grandmother's face, and the looks of horror of those around her, with a wild cry she flung herself upon her knees, took the cold, clammy hand in hers, gave one agonized look into the eyes fixed in the ghastly death-stare, and fainted. Theodore took her in his arms and carried her up stairs; Belle followed; soon the room was full. But when Dr. Morgan, who had assisted in removing Mrs. Irving to her room, ascertained that life was re-

extinct, he went to Violet, and, turning everybody but Clemence and Mrs. Seaton out of the chamber, after some time succeeded in restoring her to consciousness.

We will not attempt to describe the poor girl's feelings when she heard that *all was over*. Heart and brain seemed benumbed. For hours she sat throwing thick masses of hair from her forehead; she stared wildly around, yet seemed to see nothing.

When informed of her friend's death, Mrs. Ives hurried thither. At first Violet did not seem to recognize her; when she did,—“Take her away, take her away!” she cried, piteously; and, finding her presence distressed her, taking a last look at her school friend, Mrs. Ives, returned home.

This shrinking from Mrs. Ives was the only sign of consciousness Violet showed for days, and Dr. Morgan became seriously alarmed for her mind.

Merciful numbness, blessed confusion of ideas which, at such times, renders everything vague and uncertain, making the cruel reality seem a dream from which we must awaken.

Gradually came the full realization, the bitter, bitter pang, the passionate tears, followed by the deep sleep of exhaustion, the rousing with a start, the dim consciousness that *something dreadful* had happened, and the awakening up to overwhelming sorrow. The livid face and horrible death-stare were ever before poor Violet.

“Oh God, I shall go mad!” she would often exclaim; and, indeed, she was very near it.

Tender thoughts followed, melting her to tears, and, with the big drops coursing each other down her cheeks, starting to her feet and wringing her hands, she would

sob out unconnected sentences, and begin again that incessant hurried pacing of the floor which had almost destroyed her during her grandmother's illness. Impatient of consolation, she spoke to none but Clemence, and to her of but the one subject,—that harrowing scene,—dwelling with painful minuteness on every little incident.

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"Annie, dear Annie, I shall pray for you," and hurried from the room.

"I'm glad she's gone; she's so good, I'm afraid to speak before her," Mrs. Vivian remarked when Mrs. Ives was out of hearing.

Not so Mrs. Irving; uncomfortable while she remained, she wished Mrs. Ives away; but when she was gone, all hope of heaven seemed to have gone with her, and she would have given the world to have her back, to be alone with her again, if but for a half hour, to get her to pray with her, to ask, oh, so many questions which had not occurred to her till then. But politeness prevented her expressing her feelings; and, imputing her preoccupied manner to lassitude, the lively lady rattled on, and, after listening awhile to the well-told gossip, Mrs. Irving thought perhaps it was as well that it had happened so.

"Doubtless you've heard the shocking *on dit* of Mrs. Green and the Baron?"

"Not a syllable."

The scandalous tale took some time in the telling. Mrs. Vivian had an engagement at two o'clock; it wanted but a few minutes of the time, and she was hurrying away, when Mrs. Irving called her back to say she would find a card at home for Wednesday evening, Violet's birth-day.

"The poor child has been immured so long in a sick room she begins to look quite faded," said, or rather gasped Mrs. Irving, exhausted by talking; "and as I am so much better, I have insisted upon having a few friends in the evening."

"You will not venture down stairs?" inquired Mrs. Vivian, looking her surprise.

"Oh, yes, I am quite well—only weak." Poor soul!

she had scarcely strength to speak. "You must not fail us, dear; Violet is fagged to death, and you see I am incapable of the least exertion."

"You may depend upon me," responded Mrs. Vivian; "I always enjoy myself more here than anywhere else. Of *course* you'll have the Baron, and Nora Green, too? Shut up as you are, you're not expected to be *au fait* of people's naughty doings. It will be amusing to see how they will conduct themselves before the world. Should they have the grace to blush, however, we shall never discover it through Dora's rouge and Van Rosentheldt's hair;" and, wafting a kiss to the invalid from the tips of her gloved fingers, the gay lady, with a light laugh, tripped down stairs, saying to herself, "The woman's mad; she's dying fast as she can."

* * * * *

The drawing-rooms were lighted up, the company began to arrive, the street door bell was constantly ringing, but, reclining languidly in her luxuriously cushioned chair, Mrs. Irving had not the energy to commence dressing.

"Turn the glass, Clemence," she said feebly, "so that I can see myself." Clemence obeyed. "Heavens! I'm a perfect horror; pale as a ghost, and so emaciated!" she exclaimed, when she caught a full-length view of herself in the cheval glass. "I'm not fit to be seen; I can't go down; you must receive, Violet, and make my excuses."

"No, dear grandmamma, my birth-day must be spent with you; I would not enjoy myself at all without you; nobody would. If you're not well enough, I'll tell John to say so at the door."

"If I was only dressed!" murmured Mrs. Irving, resting her head against the chair.

"We will make your toilet in a trice, if you allow us, grandmamma. Can't we Clemence?"

"Oui, Mademoiselle;" and, supported by Violet, the little Frenchwoman slipped on the elegant cinnamon-colored bayedere robe with black velvet stripes.

"Sit down, now, grandmamma," said Violet, assisting her tenderly, as if she had been an infant; "it is so long, you need not change your slippers; your feet are not seen, and if by any chance they are, Queen Victoria, I am sure, has not prettier. Clemence, the cap."

Setting the coquettish head-dress far back on the poor drooping head, and confining it with a couple of pins, (tiny birds of paradise of filigree gold and precious stones,) Violet smoothed the blond lace, drew it and the pink roses closer to the faded cheeks, stepped back a few paces, gazed fondly at her grandmother, and added, with a sad smile,—

"Beautiful Mrs. Irving! Clemence, doesn't she look like herself?"

"O! oui, Madame; été toujours belle, toujours aimable," replied the Frenchwoman.

"The roses give a sweet tinge to your cheeks; but they are pale—too pale, dear grandmamma; you want fresh air;" and, hanging affectionately over her, Violet laid her own cheek, paling through anxiety for her, for a moment to Mrs. Irving's, kissed her again, and, wrapping the scarlet camel's-hair shawl carefully and becomingly around her, Violet on one side and Clemence on the other, Mrs. Irving descended the stairs.

As she looked at her grandmother reclining gracefully on the sofa, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright-

ened by feverish excitement, Violet was more than ever convinced that the projected trip to Europe was all she required to restore her to her wonted health.

Mrs. Vivian occupied a part of the sofa with Mrs. Irving, the Baron hanging on an arm of the sofa, and Mrs. Green on a low lounging chair in front of them. They were laughing heartily at something Mrs. Green had said, the Baron excepted, who, mystified as usual, was imploring Madame Irving would be kind enough to translate for him,—when, suddenly, a strange, dull, fixed look came over Mrs. Irving's face. Deathly pale, her head sank on her breast. The Baron hastened in quest of a tumbler of water. Mrs. Vivian began fanning her. Mrs. Seaton, who considered the party a dangerous experiment, and was anxiously watching the invalid, hastened to her.

"She has fainted," said Mrs. Green.

"Good God, she is dying!" cried Mrs. Seaton, in a tone of horror. "Theodore, Dr. Morgan, come here!"

Everybody crowded round the sofa. Violet was in the next room engaged in earnest conversation with Willie Ashton; but, attracted by the commotion, and supposing that, overcome by the exertion, her grandmother had fainted, she ran in. The persons around the sofa made room for her; and, shocked at the expression of her grandmother's face, and the looks of horror of those around her, with a wild cry she flung herself upon her knees, took the cold, clammy hand in hers, gave one agonized look into the eyes fixed in the ghastly death-stare, and fainted. Theodore took her in his arms and carried her up stairs; Belle followed; soon the room was full. But when Dr. Morgan, who had assisted in removing Mrs. Irving to her room, ascertained that life was really

extinct, he went to Violet, and, turning everybody but Clemence and Mrs. Seaton out of the chamber, after some time succeeded in restoring her to consciousness.

We will not attempt to describe the poor girl's feelings when she heard that *all was over*. Heart and brain seemed benumbed. For hours she sat throwing thick masses of hair from her forehead; she stared wildly around, yet seemed to see nothing.

When informed of her friend's death, Mrs. Ives hurried thither. At first Violet did not seem to recognize her; when she did,—“Take her away, take her away!” she cried, piteously; and, finding her presence distressed her, taking a last look at her school friend, Mrs. Ives, returned home.

This shrinking from Mrs. Ives was the only sign of consciousness Violet showed for days, and Dr. Morgan became seriously alarmed for her mind.

Merciful numbness, blessed confusion of ideas which, at such times, renders everything vague and uncertain, making the cruel reality seem a dream from which we must awaken.

Gradually came the full realization, the bitter, bitter pang, the passionate tears, followed by the deep sleep of exhaustion, the rousing with a start, the dim consciousness that *something dreadful* had happened, and the awakening up to overwhelming sorrow. The livid face and horrible death-stare were ever before poor Violet.

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down on the nearest chair. In the large bayed window were their work-tables, the books they were reading lay about, and in the recess the piano. How often had they played duets upon it! Violet staggered to it, opened it, pressed her lips to the keys, and, as she raised her tearful eyes, Mrs. Irving's portrait, beautiful and life-like, smiled down upon her from the wall. For a moment her heart stood still; oppressed by a sickening feeling, her head swam, everything grew dark before her; but she did not faint. Burying her face in her hands, she gave way to a passionate burst of grief. Where can her eyes rest, that that too sensitive sorrow-stricken heart will not meet with some object to give an added pang? Poor girl! Pictures, busts, that Psyche in the niche!—well does she remember her grandmother's exclamations of delight when it was placed there. How she stood off and admired it, and came near, viewing it in every light! The very carpet on the floor, the oaken paneling of the wall,—all, everything, was rife with reminiscences of the past, and with them came the terrible thought, "*Never, never shall I see her more!*" which, like Calise on the heart of the defeated queen, seemed graven there for life. A footstep on the stairs; it approaches. Mrs. Seaton's business-like tones; Belle's trite, worn-out scraps of consolation could not be endured in that room, and with her present feelings. Whoever it was, they were too near to render escape by flight possible, and, hastily drying her tears, Violet went to the table and began turning over the cards and notes of condolence which she had not before seen. The name upon one arrested her attention; she looked them through; there was no other; he must have written. *With a trembling hand she broke the seals, and ran her*

eye over the interminable pile of straw-colored, pink, violet, blue, and white notes; but she found not the name she sought.


"Oh, Willie! and in this my deep, my *awful* affliction!" groaned Violet. "Never, never will I think of him more!" Her head dropped upon her folded arms, and tears, bitter tears, rushed to her eyes. She was roused by some one opening the door; it was John with a note.

"Please, Miss, Mr. Vane is in the drawing-room waiting for an answer."

John spoke rapidly, to conceal the tremor of his voice. It was the first time he had seen Violet since her grandmother's death.

With a gesture of impatience, Violet tossed the note on the table; but at sight of the familiar characters, many, many things recurred to her, among others the following lines, addressed to her soon after Vane's rejection:—

"Tis vain you bid me love no more,
Forget the happy past;
It was a dream—the dream is o'er—
A dream too sweet to last;
But boyhood, manhood's love was thine;
It cannot now depart;
There treasured lies, in that lang sync,
The bliss of this sad heart.
For naught on earth would I forego
The mem'ry of those days,—
Fond sunny smiles, words sweet and low,
Thy pretty childish ways!
In my loved home, there, there, oh! there,
Violet, thou'rt with me still;
Each woodland path, ay, everywhere—
The river's brink, the breezy hill,



The porch, the pictures on the wall,
The harp, the books, the flowers—
How vividly do they recall
Those blessed, blessed hours!
The tall, dark clock behind the door,
Seen through my blinding tears;
The very carpet on the floor,
The dear, familiar chairs,
All speak to me of dear lang syne,
When thy young heart was mine.
Dead is the elm, beneath whose shade
You oft have read with me;
You loved me, Violet, when we played
Beneath that old elm-tree.
Hast thou forgot how, seated there,
Thy soft hand clasped in mine,
I kissed away each childish tear
Of old lang syne?
How there we planned our future life,
Under that old elm tree;
You were to be my little wife,
I, all the world to thee!
Ah, like bright stars mid clouds that shine
Upon a stormy sea,
Those vanished joys of dear lang syne
Shall ever be to me.
Violet, this aching heart will be,
This breaking heart of mine,
To its last throb, as *true to thee,*
As in that dear lang syne.

And as she thought them over, she felt sorry, truly sorry, that she had been the cause of unhappiness to so kind a heart. Ah! it requires a touch of sorrow to make us feel for the sorrows of others. Until now she had never known what suffering was.

“Poor Harry! he is not ‘*all the world*’ to me, but—
but why was he not my brother? I could love him

dearly as a brother;" and, with a sigh, she broke open the note. He no longer addressed her as a lover; he wrote as a brother to a beloved sister in their mutual affliction. Blinded by her tears, Violet could scarcely read it. "Ask Mr. Vane up, John," she said, when she had finished, and her heart beat quick at the sound of the well-remembered footstep. She met him at the door, and held out her hand and tried to speak, but the whispered words died on her lips, and, turning her head away, she burst into tears.

Vane took her cold, trembling hand in both of his, and pressed them in silence, and, leading her to the sofa, sat down beside her. Her handkerchief was to her eyes, but she felt the hand that clasped hers tremble; she heard his deep sigh, and, burying her head in the sofa cushions, she sobbed passionately, uncontrollably.

Vane let her cry; he knew it would do her good; but when the sobs grew low and less frequent, bending down over her, and speaking tenderly and soothingly to her as he would to a child,—

"Violet," he said, "you loved me once as a brother; think of me, treat me as such *now*; and, so help me Heaven, I will act a brother's part by you. Your happiness shall be the study of my life;" and his voice trembled as he added, "Yes, Violet, though you bestow your hand upon another, you will ever find a brother in *me*."

And Violet felt the promise would be kept; she knew his noble, generous, unselfish nature was capable of any sacrifice, and tried to tell him so; but, choked by tears, she could only press his hand in silence. That pressure sealed the compact. From that hour, constituting himself the connecting link between the world, excluded by the bowed shutters and the sad circle within, Vane's

presence in the house of mourning was like a sunbeam penetrating its gloom. Gentle, quiet, sympathetic, yet cheerful, he exerted the happiest influence upon Violet's shattered nerves; he talked to her of old times, of her dear grandmother, and, without chiding her excessive grief, led her mind to other thoughts; read to the ladies of an evening, sliding occasionally into the *on dits* of society. How this rising lawyer found time for this *brotherly* devotion, was miraculous. Mrs. Seaton, who was a very practical person, said it only proved the well-known apothegm, "Where there is a *will* there is a *way*." Harry Vane was left sole executor; and a tangled web lay before the executor. Bank-book unbalanced, rents in arrears, notes to be met, and no funds to make payments with. On the plea of ill health, Mrs. Irving's agent gave up her business a short time previous to her death, and, ignorant of such matters, borrowing and spending recklessly, she had contrived so to complicate matters that, unless the creditors proved very accommodating, it would require such sacrifices of property that Vane had serious apprehensions, instead of being an heiress, when the estate was settled, Violet would have scarcely enough to support her. A whisper of this had transpired, and is the solution of the enigmatical conduct which had puzzled Mrs. Irving and Violet. Wealthy as he was, Willie Ashton had made up his mind that he could not afford a poor wife. Mrs. Ashton must have her cashmeres, and diamonds, and extravagances, as well as her husband his fast trotters, costly wines, and delicious havanas, and, consequently, the money to pay for them.

Vane, on the contrary, thanked God that, sole executor, there would be no one to betray him, determined to

share his last penny with her he loved, and would have worked night and day rather than Violet should be deprived of the luxuries to which she was accustomed. Fortunately his means were ample.

"Rumor," cogitated the lawyer, "is trumpet-tongued as well as argus-eyed. I must get Violet out of town, or some kind officious friend will be sure to enlighten her. Heaven knows how people find out things!" and, with his pen-staff to his lips, he sat some time turning the matter over in his mind. "*I have it!*" was the thought that brightened up his fine face. "She has a rich country aunt, if she's not dead, residing somewhere in Bucks County. I'll write and tell her how matters stand, and ask her to receive Violet until arrangements for her future can be made. No, hang it! that won't do; she might be afraid she would never get rid of her. I'll request an invitation for a few weeks; the shock has deranged her niece's nerves, and the poor girl requires change of air and scene. Mrs. Irving treated the woman scandalously, to be sure, but I, the executor, am not expected to be cognizant of family feuds;" and the managing executor, in virtue of the same, looking up his best note-paper, forthwith hastened to inform the said aunt of Mrs. Irving's sudden demise, the dreadful shock to Violet, and ended by a request that she would pardon the liberty he was about to take in applying to her in her niece's behalf, trespassing yet further by suggesting that as Miss Irving was not aware of the fact, it would probably be best that Mrs. Munson's answer should be addressed to her niece in the form of an invitation.

"Cool assurance!" muttered Vane, as he ran his eye hastily over what he had written; "*outrageous!* considering the relative position of the parties; but there's no

help for it;" and, folding the missive, not succeeding in finding a note envelope, he slipped it into a large yellow business-like cover,—the only one that happened to be at hand,—sealed it with black wax, locked the office door, put the key in his pocket, and went up the street to drop it into the dispatch. But, recollecting Dr. Morgan came from that part of the State, and would most probably be able to give him some information respecting the country aunt, he bent his steps thither. The Doctor's carriage was at the door, the old gentleman coming down the steps; and, assuming the air of one who had something of importance to communicate, (M. D.'s are almost always more or less of gossips)—

"Well met, Doctor," he said, shaking hands; "can you tell me anything of a Mrs. Munson, who resides, or did reside, in the neighborhood of Abbotsford?"

"Mrs. Munson? what the mischief do you want with her?" questioned the Doctor, in extreme surprise.

"I have written to request she will invite her niece to make her a visit," replied Vane, laughing, amused at the Doctor's mystification. "I've done more; I've taken the liberty of suggesting that the invitation should appear the result of her own kindness."

"The devil you have!" and the Doctor shouted. "Do you know," he said, as soon as he could speak for laughing, "that Mrs. Irving and Mrs. Munson detested each other, and that there never was any intercourse between the families? I doubt very much if Violet knows she has such a relation."

Vane smiled a determined, cool, lawyer-like smile, as he answered, "I'm aware of the facts. What sort of a person is the aunt?"

"*One of the first families* in the neighborhood," re-

plied the Doctor; and, gathering the reins in his hand, was about to step into his carriage, when, placing himself between the corpulent Doctor and the door, Vane effectually barred his entrance.

"I'll not detain you a moment—but, Doctor, tell me something of this country aunt."

"Whew!" said the Doctor, impatient to be gone; *she's a character.*"

"Good, bad, or indifferent?" asked Vane, cool as a cucumber.

"A weary man might as well throw himself into a briar patch to rest, as a spoiled, petted, refined girl hope for sympathy or companionship from Aunt Munson," was the reply. "The woman's a human electrical. Poor Violet will die of shocks. By Jove, I'd like to be present at the meeting!"

"Thank you!" and Vane bowed; "it is exactly the thing; I'm glad you thought of it; you are a friend of the lady's; hold yourself in readiness to escort Violet. Good morning!" and he stepped aside to let the Doctor pass.

"I think I can venture to promise I will, when Mrs. *Munson invites* her;" and Dr. Morgan, pushing himself into the narrow door, drove off.

Vane's letter found the eccentric hard at work in her flower-garden. A tall, limp, switchy figure, in a rusty alpaca gown and gingham sun-bonnet, chopping away around the roots of a rose-bush.

"Mrs. Munson, *sure*, an' here's a letter for ye!" and, creeping down the wide gravelled walk at a snail's pace, Debby, the red-headed servant girl, held up Vane's missive.

Mrs. Munson disliked her pen; she wrote to nobody

but her son at Carlisle College, and not often to him; she had had a letter from Joe but the day before, and, impatient to know who her correspondent could be, down went the hoe in the walk, and, jerking off, first one and then the other coarse garden-glove, she sent them sailing after it, and feeling on her forehead, and then in her pocket—

“Run to the house and bring me my spectacles,” she said to the girl; “they’re on the end of the mantelpiece. A man’s hand; black wax; Philadelphia! Who on earth can it be from?” and taking the letter from the envelope, she held it off at arm’s length, then up to the end of her nose; but in vain; screw up her eyes as she would, the desired focus could not be obtained. “*Run!*” she muttered, looking at the girl traipsing along as if her feet were tied. “I never knew her to *run* in my life but when she had a waiter of tumblers in her hand, and then she was sure to stumble over something and smash them all;” and she strode off to the house. Debby was descending the steps as she reached them.

“They ain’t on the mantle, mam.”

“They are,” responded Mrs. Munson, angrily; and, brushing past her, she went to the chimney, muttering, “I’m *sure* I left them there. I do wish people would let my things stand where I put them.”

When provoked or puzzled, the country aunt had an ugly habit of conversing with herself, and not unfrequently told herself hateful things of persons she was far from believing in a cooler moment.

“Eva! Eva!” and as Mrs. Munson stood at the foot of the stairs, her querulous voice went whistling up like a northeaster. “Have you seen my spectacles?”


“*They are in the book on the table, aunt;*” and a

pretty little sylph, following the delicious tones, tripping down the wide staircase, said, as she entered the room, "You laid them there when you were going in the garden."

"I left them on the mantelpiece," persisted Mrs. Munson, though going toward the table; but Eva was before her, and, taking the spectacles from the book, with a sunny smile held them up to her aunt. The aunt wasted no time in thanks. Settling them upon her remarkable nose, which seemed made for the express purpose, she ran her eyes rapidly over the letter.

"H. Vane! I should like to know *who* H. Vane *is*? and by what right he makes *suggestions* to me?" The crimson spots on either sallow cheek grew more intensely red as she reperused it more leisurely. "Dead, is she? Proud, cruel woman! I'll have nothing to do with the Irvings, *dead* or *alive*!" and Mrs. Munson crushed the letter in her hand, looking as if it would have afforded her infinite satisfaction to *crush* the Irvings; and, taking a bunch of keys from her pocket, opened the old-fashioned secretary in the recess, drew a chair, and seating herself, still communing with her own wrathful spirit, said, or rather muttered, as she peeped into sundry drawers and pigeon holes, "Do they suppose I've forgotten her barbarous treatment of poor Kate? They never took the trouble to write a line to tell me whether the child was dead or alive, and *now*, forsooth, that they don't know what to do with her, she's packed off to *me*; but she may stay where she is! Thank heaven, my *house* is my *own*! I'll invite who I please to it! Mr. H. Vane may keep his counsel for his clients."

Mr. H. Vane had unconsciously pursued the only course to insure an immediate answer. Mrs. Munson's



was not the pen of a ready writer. A letter to a stranger was to her a serious affair, and, under other circumstances, would most probably have been indefinitely postponed. But deeply incensed, she was miserable until the object of her wrath was informed of her opinion of his conduct.

In one of the numerous small drawers her eye fell upon a folded paper; she had forgotten it was there; opening it, she laid it before her on the desk, and looked long and fixedly at the little silky lock of hair treasured within, and as she did so, a strange moisture gathered in her eyes, her tightly compressed lips began to quiver, her stern brow to relax, and in a subdued voice she murmured, still speaking to herself,—“*She* put the baby in my arms, and, with her dying breath, begged me to be a mother to her child;” and her brimming eyes and quivering lips said, “the promise *shall not* be broken;” and from the way her aunt seized her pen and went spluttering down the page, Eva was sure she had arrived at an important decision.

“Read *that*,” she said, tossing Vane’s letter to Eva when she had directed and sealed her reply. “Did you ever hear such impertinence?”

“Dreadful! poor Violet!” and Eva’s inquiring glance asked, is she to come to us.

“The invitation’s given,” answered the aunt, replying to the look, “and I suppose she’ll come; it seems she’s nowhere else to go to.”

A companion of her own age had ever been the yearning desire of Eva’s heart.

“Oh, I am so glad she’s coming!” she exclaimed, perfectly radiant with delight.

A variety of emotions were struggling in the aunt's breast.

"Poor little fool!" she said, "because she is your cousin, you think she must be a friend. Eva, she comes of a proud, cruel race. In return for your kindness, she will laugh at your rusticity and scorn your affection. Her mother's sin was being country bred, and not a millionaire's daughter."

"Oh, aunt! remember it was the grandmother, not Violet, who was unkind."

"Who reared Violet? whose notions will she have?" asked the aunt, in her shrill, ragged voice. Pretty Eva knew when to be silent.

Violet's amazement at the invitation exceeded, if possible, Mrs. Munson's indignation at being dictated to by H. Vane. Rachel Munson must be a *horror*, thought Violet, as she puzzled over the extraordinary epistle which, while extending an invitation to her house, said as distinctly, remember it is for your *own* gratification, not *mine*; I expect no pleasure from the visit. The autography was as peculiar as the style. Had a daddy-longlegs fallen into the ink-stand, and, jumping out on the paper in the extremity of its fright, ran hither and thither over it, it could hardly have executed more unreadable hieroglyphics; and provoked by so equivocal an attention, in happy ignorance of her own affairs, Violet was about to decline on the instant, when, as she replaced her aunt's letter in the envelope, she found it contained a note which she had overlooked. The writing neat and flowing, as the aunt's was cramped and scrawly, if such a combination can be imagined, was from Eva, her affectionate sympathy being sweetly and gracefully expressed. Satisfied that *she*, at least, was a charming per-

son, and feeling it would be a relief to escape from the painful associations by which she was surrounded, with one of those sudden impulses common to her age and character, Violet sat down and wrote as graceful an acceptance. When Vane came, in the evening, he had the satisfaction to find she would leave town that day week.


CHAPTER IV.

TIME toils ever onward; hours grow to days, days to weeks, weeks to months, months to years, and years into *Eternity*!

Like ocean's restless billows, forever changing though still the same, daylight and darkness succeed each other; seed-time and harvest, the star-lit sky, slowly revolving earth and illimitable deep, remain as when God called them into being; and, in the sameness of existence, *Time* melts imperceptibly away.

To-day, Violet leaves for Elmwood. Too proud to confess it even to herself, the overflowing drop in her cup of sorrow was Willie's cruel desertion of her. Everywhere else, he ignored her very existence; and although fully decided not to accept him even should he propose, yet every ring at the street door, every step in the hall, set her in a flutter; for hope, like a stray sunbeam in a dark corner, kept quivering in her sad heart. But she was going away, and he had not called. Harry was out of town; Mrs. Seaton and the Doctor had taken leave soon after breakfast, and poor Violet, as she sat on the sofa in her own room, with her handkerchief to her eyes and Belle beside her, felt, of all forlorn creatures in existence, the most lonely and wretched, as if all love for her was buried in the grave with her dear grandmother; and earnestly did she wish she was sleeping there too.

Clemence had been up half the night packing, and—a



wonderful achievement for her—rose with the sun, was fussing round, going about cramming every forgotten article into her miraculous and brilliant traveling-sack, saying, as she stuffed them in, "*ve may want itte*;" when, stooping to pick up something on the floor, her corn came in contact with a foot-stool,—"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the profane creature, making a frightful grimace.


"Suppose you put it in your bag; you may want it;" said Belle, smiling.

"Quelle bêtise!" retorted Clemence, giving Belle a rabid look, as she flirted past her to the door. Clemence had been in a pet from the time she had heard of the projected visit. The Frenchwoman mortally detested *de wood*, as she termed every place remote from the city; was in dread and fear of cows, dogs, wasps, toads,—in short, of everything. So arrant a coward was she, that she had more than once been seen running fast as she could, and shrieking *Mon Dieu!* pursued by an infuriated turkey-gobbler. But Clemence's horror of horrors was bears, which, in her simplicity, the poor woman believed to be lurking behind every bush.

Presuming upon her faithful service she did not hesitate to scold the girls soundly whenever they displeased her, and the air of offended dignity with which she sailed out of the room with her mouth pursed up, her head thrown back, and her chin tossed up in the air, was too droll. Clemence's elbows, the very sweep of her skirts, had an incensed, injured expression when she was angry. The inopportune jest had not only provoked Clemence, but deeply wounded Violet; but, aware it would be as impossible to make Belle comprehend her feelings as *the hieroglyphics* on the pyramids in Egypt, the poor

girl sighed, and cried on in silence. Violet loved Belle, not as she would have loved one with whom she had more sympathy, but with a sort of habitual affection,—the attachment she would have felt for anything she had owned from childhood; their lives had been passed together, and Belle's conduct for the last few weeks had deepened the feeling of kindliness into a warmer sentiment, and, in truth, Violet was trying hard to persuade herself into the belief that Belle possessed more feeling than she had given her credit for; but this foolish jest and unlucky smile had ruined all. No; if Belle had loved her, she *could* not have *jested* at *such* a moment.

"There's the carriage!" and in perfect unconsciousness of her crime, Belle started up, went to the band-box, and, taking from it the black bonnet and long crape veil, handed them to Violet. Violet turned from them with a shudder. Assuming the mourning weeds was to her, as it were, setting the seal to death, this was the first time she had put on her bombazine dress, and she would not have done it now had she not been going among strangers. But Belle pursued her with the bonnet, put it on her, tied it under her chin, and ended by opening out the bow, as if preparing her for a walk in Chestnut street, passed her arm around the weeping girl's waist and drew her out of the room. Clemence, meanwhile, on the front steps, with Violet's shawl over her arm and the brilliant traveling-sack in her hand, was seeing the trunks strapped on, and thinking of the last time she stood there performing the same office. Fussy, often cross; blind as a bat to the beauty of scenery, and, of all mortals, the least romantic, the old nurse had a heart. It was a bright day; women were passing the door with trays on their heads, and the cries



of buy fish? buy cherries? shrill and clear, rose above the tinkling of the charcoal-man's bell; children with books under their arms, tripping gaily along to school; the girl next door washing off the steps, humming Old Folks at Home; the cat, whose horrid mewling had annoyed Mrs. Irving so much during her illness, lay at the garret window opposite, winking and blinking as the sunlight flashed up, from the roof tiles, in her eyes. "*Mon Dieu! just as if dis vos like all de oder days ob de year,*" muttered Clemence, as she walked into the house and slammed the door after her.

Violet had not found courage to enter the drawing-rooms since the dreadful scene she had witnessed there; but she could not quit the house without doing so; hearing the door shut, and supposing Dr. Morgan, who was to accompany her, had come, breaking away from Belle, she ran down and locked herself in ere Belle overtook her, or, indeed, suspected her intention. A withered bouquet in one of the vases gave out the sickly odor peculiar to dead flowers—Violet perceived it.

"Death! the room smells of *death!*" she exclaimed, as she threw herself, sobbing, on a sofa.

"Violet dear, let me in; please open the door!" and Belle tried to unfasten it; "you'll unfit yourself for traveling."

"*Vous ete malade à présent,*" bawled Clemence through the keyhole; "*I vill ab de trunk take off de carriage.*"

"Let me alone, for heaven's sake!" sobbed Violet.

The first bitter moment past, how many, many events came crowding before her, as she lay there! for grief, like dreams, has its sudden strange transitions. *How happy, how miserable,* had she been in that room!

(Mrs. Irving owned the house and had always lived there; the new front—an admirable imitation of brown-stone—stylish entrance, and marble steps were recent improvements,) Violet had known no other home. To the thinker, the inanimate objects by which they are surrounded become, as it were, tablets inscribed with the diary of their mental existence. Such, to Violet, was the dark mass of ivy on the house across the street; the window-shutter opposite the sofa on which she had thrown herself had blown open. Some one had raised the blinds and pushed aside the curtain; and glancing that way, they brought back, as they were always sure to do, the memory of the past. A constant source of amusement had those vines been to her from childhood, when her head reached no higher than the window-ledge; standing on a low stool, she loved to see the snow-flakes powder them; and when the thaw began, it was with a feeling of triumph she beheld the imprisoned ivy wave itself free, and the long row of glittering icicles fringing the roof, drop off. A solitary child, tiring of books and toys, she would remain for hours watching the swallows that had built their nests under the eaves, feeding their young, or hopping about among the dark ivy leaves sparkling with rain-drops after a summer shower. Year by year, as the vines crept higher and higher, and Violet grew into girlhood, a companionless little maiden, the nursery now her chamber, she would sit for hours at her window, her eyes upon the vines, her mind full of vague fancies and questionings of the whys and wherefores of life. Fancies, that passed not as the snow-wreath from the waving vines, the bird from the eaves, or the rain-drop from the ivy leaves, but, interwoven with her young life, became an integral part of it, and returned to her by

fragments whenever she looked at them. Just now they recalled the harrowing alternations of hope and fear she had suffered during her dear grandmother's illness; and, faint and sick at heart, she closed her eyes to shut out, if possible, the agonizing thoughts.

"Where is Violet?" she heard Dr. Morgan ask in the hall.

Bereavement and distress were every-day occurrences to the Doctor; he had little patience with what to him seemed fanciful or unreasonable sorrow; and, moreover, he had the horrid habit of jesting in order to raise the spirits; and, dreading him in either mood, drawing her thick veil over her face, Violet unfastened the door, hastily embraced Belle, ran down the steps, and was in the carriage before the portly M.D. could pick up his Quarterly, which had slipped from under his arm while shaking hands with Belle.

"Get in;" and the burly Doctor stood aside for Clemence.

A mark of consideration extremely flattering; but, unfortunately, in following her in he came down mercilessly upon Clemence's corn; and the unfeeling man smiled at the shocking ugly faces she made, instead of apologizing for the torture he had inflicted. The Frenchwoman opposite, provoked and victimized, looking daggers, Violet crying in the corner beside him, Dr. Morgan betook himself to his Quarterly Review.

It was near sunset of the second day after leaving Philadelphia, that they reached Abbotsford; weary and sad as she was, for the moment Violet's pale face kindled with her old enthusiasm when she looked from the carriage window at the landscape before her. The new little village, nestled in a hollow, protected from the keen north

wind by rocky hills clothed to their summits with tall firs; the golden sky in the back-ground shimmering among the leaves and throwing out in bold relief the clumps of sombre evergreens scattered here and there on the bare rocks; a clear stream,—reflecting rocks, trees, meadow-lands, waving trees, and blue sky,—all at once foaming over a ledge of rocks into the mill-pond below. But they were in the village; dogs barking, men, women, and children running to the doors and windows to stare at them; the boys, playing ball on the common, stopped their game to gape as the carriage passed; the very cows they met lazily wending their way homeward in the green lane through which their course lay, standing still for a moment to gaze at them, set off on a brisker trot, making the bells suspended from their necks, jingle merrily.

Strange, that the sight of a carriage should create such a sensation! thought Violet; and, notwithstanding Eva's lady-like note, a sunburnt face and coarse, freckled hands, *flitted* before her mental vision, which disappeared as suddenly when she caught a glimpse (between the trees) of a stone house, with verandas and picturesque irregularities, evidently additions to the main building. A long avenue of magnificent elms, which, meeting here and there overhead, formed natural arches; a neatly shaven lawn, sprinkled with ornamental trees; and a pillared porch, quite assured her, and she felt convinced that, however *eccentric*, Rachel Munson could not be a *vulgar person*. In her eagerness to meet her new relatives, leaving the Doctor fumbling on the seat for his cane and Quarterly, she sprang from the carriage and ran up the steps.

"Are the ladies at home?" she inquired of a queer-

looking woman who stood in the porch, staring, as Violet thought, rather rudely at her. But receiving no answer, she repeated the question. "The woman's deaf or dumb; I asked her if the ladies were at home, but she does not speak," said Violet to the Doctor, who just then came up the steps.

"Your niece, Mrs. Munson;" and looking very solemn from the effort not to laugh, Dr. Morgan shook hands with the supposed domestic.

Violet recoiled some steps; with difficulty she repressed the shriek that rose to her lips. Heavens! that limp, sallow object, *her aunt!*

"Neither deaf, dumb, nor blind, thank Heaven!" said the aunt, in a shrill voice; and, as if suddenly endowed with locomotion, extending a hand to each, added, "Come in out of the east wind;" and, turning her back on her visitors, led the way into the house.

"I need not ask if you are well, Doctor," she observed, glancing over his portly figure; "how is Mrs. Morgan?"

"In quite as good condition, thank you;" and putting aside the skirts of his coat with the peculiar instinct of the faculty for appropriating comforts, the Doctor was about depositing himself in the most inviting chair in the parlor, when Mrs. Munson, darting to it, rolled it off to another part of the room.


"*You* a popular physician, and going to sit in that draft! To-morrow you would be groaning with rheumatism and wondering how you got it!" And taking her spectacles from her pocket as she spoke, Mrs. Munson put them on, and, turning to Violet, who in dumb amazement continued standing just within the door, surveyed the poor girl from head to foot as coolly and critically *as if she had been a statue or picture she was about to purchase.*

It was not Violet Irving the aunt was looking at or thinking of. The dark eyes so full of fire, yet humbly tender, transparent skin, and finely-cut features, were her own dear Kate's; and while Mrs. Munson stood there staring so fiercely, knitting her heavy brows and pressing her thin lips tightly together to keep back the tears from her eagle eyes, had the strange woman followed the dictates of her feelings, she would have gathered the pale, weary girl close to her breast, and wept over her in very fondness. Glancing up into the hard, stern face before her, Violet thought of black Agnes, Meg Merrilies, Flora McGregor, and all the grim manly women she had ever read or heard of, bitterly regretting the impulsiveness which had led her so recklessly to throw herself among strangers, and thus brought her in contact with the horror.

"Take off your things, child," Mrs. Munson said, at last, in a tone quite at variance with her cast-iron face. It wasn't her ordinary tone; it was the *sister's heart* speaking to dear, dead Kate's child. The Doctor's curiosity was satisfied; he had witnessed the meeting; and, procuring his hat and cane, he walked to the village. As soon as he was gone Mrs. Munson offered to conduct Violet to her chamber.

Clemence, meanwhile, (who, with the trunks, had been deposited in the room appropriated to Violet's use,) as soon as she found herself alone, took a deliberate survey of the premises; walking about the room and examining the antiquated furniture, she shrugged her shoulders and muttered to herself,—

"Mais quel desolate place la; no sofa, no fauteuil, no petit *table*, *nothing* for *make* de comfort; chair *hare*, chair *dare* all long de wall! Madame tink me come for



dance? Certainement no; I shall *cry*, more like, in dis room often, Mon Dieu. Mais I make it *betar dan so*."

And forthwith Clemence went to work to effect a different disposition of the movables; dragging the table out of the corner into the middle of the room, she sat round it some of the uncomfortable high-backed mahogany chairs.

"Madame *Noa* curl her hairs at dis;" and standing before the very ancient dressing-table, adjusting her cap, Clemence looked up in wonderment at the towering chest of drawers, reaching almost to the ceiling, the broad brass handles shining like gold as the rays of the setting sun flashed upon them.

"Quel horror! dat mountain patchwork! ma pauvre enfant fall out dare, her neck vill broke! She no sleep dare!"

And soon the old four-poster, with clawy terminations, was denuded of the feather-bed which had made Debby's arms ache to shake up to that imposing height; one great wool mattress and then the other was dragged off, and hustling them under the bedstead, by dint of pulling and tugging, popping off all the hooks on her basque, and smashing her dress-hoops, Clemence succeeded in getting the feather-bed on again; and, running directly counter to Mrs. Munson's directions to Debby in the morning, smashing it down as flat as possible, made up the bed afresh.

"Dare, dat vill do!" said the Frenchwoman, in the most complaisant tone, as she patted and smoothed the quilt; "mais, what for dis stand hare?" And setting her shoulder against the great unwieldy easy-chair with ghastly white cover, by a vigorous push sent it half-way across the room, placed the droll little three-legged

stool (covered with carpeting and shagged round with worsted fringe) before it; and, wiping the perspiration from her forehead, was making herself the most exaggerated compliments upon the improvement she had effected, when she remembered several handsomely-bound books which, happening to be lying about Violet's room when she was packing up, she had thrown in the trunk for the purpose of making her room in the country look nice. The trunk once opened, she thought she might as well get out Violet's writing-desk, portfolio, work-box, toilet-set, and other little *et ceteras*; and scarcely had she disposed them to her satisfaction, when the door opened and in walked Mrs. Munson and Violet.

• It was Clemence's first view of Mademoiselle's aunt. Her start and look of mingled amazement and dismay was almost too much for Violet's gravity. Mrs. Munson saw only the deep courtesy and extraordinary confusion of the room.

"What on earth have you done to the bed?" she said, going up to it and passing her hand over the subdued feathers.

"*Onder, Madame*;" and, raising the dimity valence, Clemence, pointing to the rejected mattresses, added, with another profound courtesy, "*Mais Madame say so, I put em back; de lit high as de ciel, she fall from dare her neck vill broke.*"

Amused by the old woman's extraordinary jargon, murdering, as she did, both languages, the mistress of Elmwood honored her with a grim smile.

So long in America, it was strange Clemence did not speak better English. Mrs. Irving always kept her to her French; but fond of her *Anglies*, as she called it, Clemence sported it on every convenient opportunity.

Finding the Frenchwoman waited orders, Mrs. Munson said, graciously for her,—

“Let them be; I’ll have them taken away.”

Unaccustomed to any other, Clemence did not appreciate the mild tone, poor woman; old as she was, she had much yet to learn.

“What’s your name?” demanded Mrs. Munson.

“Clemence, Madame.”

“Well, Clemence,” (the way the country aunt pronounced the name made the Frenchwoman smile, but she covered the indiscretion with the end of her black silk apron,) “do not let your apprehension for Violet’s neck induce you to saw off the legs of my mother’s old four-poster.”

“So droll, dat!” said Clemence, as soon as she was out of hearing; “I vos wish for one saw so soon I see dem leg;” and Clemence went to the door and peeped after Mrs. Munson, with a mysterious superstitious apprehensiveness, as if by no means certain Mademoiselle’s aunt was not something of a witch.

Wearied by the two days’ drive, Violet found the bed extremely comfortable; but, too much excited to sleep, she did not lay long. Smoothing her hair, she descended to the parlor. It was empty. How strange! Where could Eva be? Was the poor girl a Cinderella? What if the niece prove as disagreeable as the aunt? Oh, this unfortunate impulsiveness! But I am here. The visit will be a short one. While I stay I must make the best of it; and with this wise determination she walked to the window. It opened to the floor; three steps, and you were in the flower-garden. Violet threw up the sash and looked out. To the city girl it seemed a field of flowers. Like the *patchwork* quilt on her bed, a labyrinth of circles, semi-

circles, hearts, and rounds, bordered with box, the walks between nicely graveled. The view beyond was beautiful; the river, winding far away with many a gentle sweep and sudden bend, looking smaller and smaller, until, a silver thread, it was lost among the hills; the great trees on the lawn, growing shadowy and mysterious in the deepening twilight; long lines of stone fences, crossing and recrossing each other; meadows and hedges; and in the distance, circling round, tall trees, whose tops seemed to touch the clouds; and above, over all, the glowing sky, fast changing from transparent violet to misty gray, as night came down upon the beautiful landscape.

A puff of dewy air, laden with the perfume of flowers, blew in her face. Violet looked down; myriads of fire-flies were fluttering about in the grass, on the lawn, in the hedges, the shrubbery, the flowers, through the trees, and far, far away, like fairy lamps, borne by invisible hands. Then came pleasant rural sounds upon the wind, breaking what to her seemed the unnatural stillness. The lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep, and an occasional far-off barking of a dog, and sharp, quick, shrill cry of the cricket, which, with the uncertain light, made up of twilight and moonbeams, (the moon, a slender crescent, with a single star beside her, was just rising above the tall trees on the brow of the hill,) and the strangeness of everything, had such an effect upon Violet that, for the moment bewildered, she lost the consciousness of her identity. It seemed to her she was not herself, but some poor afflicted girl she was reading about, and that when she laid aside the book the dull, heavy weight would be lifted from her heart, and she would be happy Violet Irving again. The momentary

mystification was very sweet; and, fearing almost to breathe lest it should be dispelled, Violet stood leaning against the window-frame, looking very beautiful in her deep mourning, the moonlight streaming down upon her pale, classic face.

Creaking boots announced the Doctor; to be precipitated from this dream-state into one of Dr. Morgan's jokes was too much for her shattered nerves. At a bound, clearing the steps, she alighted almost on the head of some one who happened to be passing under the window.

"What were steps made for?" asked Mrs. Munson, in her shrillest tone, settling her cap, which had been nearly knocked off, and looking very much disposed to employ her hands in a different manner.

Choking with laughter, Violet apologized for the fright she had given her.

"Never mind; only you'd better not try it again, or you may chance to dash out your brains, as well as mine. See here," and opening her hand, exhibiting a little chicken, chirping piteously,—*"I found this little miserable under the hedge,"* she said, *"and am going to take it to the hen. Come with me;"* and, linking Violet's arm in hers, she dragged her off.

Up one flight of steps and down another, through a long, back piazza, and across the yard, Violet thought of the man of the cork leg; and it was quite with a feeling of relief, when, passing through a small gate into a neat yard, inclosed by white-washed paling, she found herself at the fowl-house. Mrs. Munson talked all the while so fast that she had no time to inquire for Eva. In returning, Violet's dress was caught by something behind, and held fast; with a cry of alarm, she clung to Mrs. Munson.

"Why don't you fly?" asked the aunt, as she stooped to extricate it from the crooked stick projecting from the woodpile, in which it had become entangled.

Roused by the strange voice, a vicious Scotch terrier, darting out of the kitchen, barking furiously, ran toward them; but recognizing Mrs. Munson, slunk back again. A sash in the upper story was thrown up; there was a light in the room, and Violet saw a slight figure and profusion of flaxen curls; Mrs. Munson saw it too. The maid of the flaxen curls observed that she did, and in went the head and down came the sash. They were before a glass door. Mrs. Munson opened it, and entering a cozy, well-lighted room, they found the Doctor on the sofa with his Quarterly, and the tea table, glittering with quaint old silver, but no Eva.

"The village has quite grown to a town," remarked Dr. Morgan, laying aside his book.

"I wish it had grown anywhere else," responded Mrs. Munson, ringing for tea.

He had forgotten; any allusion to railroads or Abbotsford never failed to put the amiable lady out of humor. That the road, contrary to her angry remonstrances, should pass through her property, Mrs. Munson considered a case of flagrant government tyranny, and the location of the village in sight of her house, a personal affront. Seeing the blunder he had committed, the Doctor became enthusiastic over the old china, called Violet's attention to the exquisite workmanship of the family plate, and examined and admired it as if it was the first time he had seen it.

"Where is Eva?" he asked, as the lady's brow relaxed.

Answering to the point, Mrs. Munson replied, "Up stairs. Shall I give you tea or coffee?"

The Doctor thought a minute: the coffee-pot was simmering on the spirit-lamp; he looked down into the corpulent little cream-pitcher at his elbow, (he had moved his chair up to the head of the table, for he liked to be near the person he was speaking to,) and answered,—

"Coffee, if you please. My patients tell me they drink it with impunity; but hang me if I can. However, I don't get Elmwood coffee and such cream every day, so I'll venture a cup and the headache. By the way, it's provoking Eva should be sick, and I leave to-morrow. Can't she wrap up and come down? What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing that I'm aware of; if she *is* sick, this is the first I've heard of it. She has been perfectly wild with delight ever since she heard Violet was coming to us. A dozen times a day the foolish child would throw aside her book or work and gaze at nothing, and when I asked what was the matter, she would say, 'thinking how Violet looks, aunt.' Her favorite authors, marked at approved passages, are all on her table ready to compare tastes, and her room has been in reception order for a week; indeed, I never saw her so silly and excited before, and I thought it a good opportunity for a lesson of self-denial. You will not see Eva to-night." And Mrs. Munson looked as if she expected to be applauded for her management.

"*Self-denial*, my dear Madam! why, the girl's an angel! There's no *self* about her;" and turning to Violet, half laughing, half angry, he added, "one of the sweetest, most unselfish creatures on earth. Poh, poh! Mrs. Munson, let us have her down at once. I want to

see the meeting;" and the Doctor rose and touched the bell.

"Some warm muffins, Debby," said Mrs. Munson to the girl who answered the bell.

"But, Mrs. Munson," remonstrated Dr. Morgan, "you forget you are punishing *me*, and I'm o'er old for lessons now."

"Such lessons never come amiss at any age," replied the inexorable, helping herself to a hot muffin.

"Do you venture hot cakes?"

"Certainly; why not? I've eaten them all my life."

Mrs. Munson was one of the Penlemon family; she never *condescended* to be *ill*. The Doctor knew it.

"Pardon me," he said, "I understood you were a dyspeptic."

"I?" she exclaimed, quite as much annoyed as he could desire. Had he accused her of delirium tremens, she could not have been more provoked.

"By the way, how is Joe getting on?"

"Pretty much like other boys," replied the mother; "he spends a great deal of money."

"Has he raised an imperial and whiskers yet?"

"Like the caterpillar youths in the city? No, indeed; I'd like to catch him at it. If he was to be such an oaf, I vow I'd cut him off with a shilling."

"Make no rash vows, Madam," said the Doctor, laughing. "Joe'll be a caterpillar when he comes to the hairy age, if he fancies it. How does Dora amuse herself without him?"

"Fishing, and shooting, and doing everything she ought not," answered Mrs. Munson.

"She's an original," remarked the Doctor, turning to Violet. "Very pretty, a sylph-like figure, and an un-

commonly sweet voice; yet every inch a boy. Followed by her dogs, she gallops over the country, brings down a bird on the wing, hooks trout when no one else can—in a word, is a merry little outlaw.”

“An original, which I hope is not copied,” said Violet; “unfeminine women are horrid.”

“Well, with all this, Dora is not masculine,” persisted the Doctor. “I bet my life you’ll fall in love with her at first sight; her prettiness, her playfulness, her airy figure and musical voice, saves her.”

“And needs all these offsets,” remarked Mrs. Munson, “when, galloping up to the door, she vaults from her saddle, and, tossing the reins to Ben, the stable boy, walks in humming a tune and smacking her whip. The family are on a visit to Mrs. Wallingford’s mother at present. It is enough to vex a saint,” (and vexed Mrs. Munson looked, but very unlike a saint,) “to think that this anomaly, an only child, rich as a Jew, sweet-tempered, with the best heart in the world, and a vast deal of talent, is growing up such a barbarian; while Miss Crim, at an enormous salary, is reading novels and strumming polkas. Mamma, a bundle of shawls, always shut up in her dressing-room, nurses herself for I hardly know what; *dyspepsia*, probably;” and Mrs. Munson smiled a grim smile at the Doctor; “her gentlemanly, weak-minded husband waiting upon her like a slave.”

Tea was over; and, stopping abruptly, clasping her hands and bowing her head upon them, without the insertion of a comma, Mrs. Munson said, in an undertone, “God make us thankful for what we have received;” and, changing to her natural voice, “If Dora was *my* daughter, I’d manage her.”

"And if I professed to be a Christian, I'd say grace with more reverence," thought Dr. Morgan.

Pleading fatigue, Violet escaped to her room.

"Oh, I am so weary!" and with a sigh she threw herself into the great easy chair.

A gentle tap at the door, and "may I come in?" in a remarkably melodious voice, and one of Raphael's angels stood before Violet! the eyes, the flaxen curls, and the peculiar expression, combining the innocence of the angelic and intelligence of the human nature! In speechless admiration, Violet could only gaze her delight, while Eva, blushing deeply, stammered an apology for her apparent unkindness in not sooner coming to welcome her, which Violet cut short by an embrace, and, drawing her down beside her into the commodious chair, said,—

"*Your* aunt (she could not bring herself to say *my* aunt) has explained it all, dear; but this is not the first glimpse I've had of you, though those pretty curls hid the face I was so anxious to see. Eva, I knew from your note you were a darling," and Violet kissed her again.

"I am so glad you've come;" and Eva threw her arms around her cousin as she spoke. "All my life I have longed for a companion of my own age, and this is the first time the wish has been gratified. I'm sure *you* won't call me romantic, and foolish, and extinguish me by '*You will not think so when you are as old as I,*'" and, pursing up her pretty mouth, Eva shook her head with a wise old look, and broke into a sweet, merry, ringing, lady-like laugh—mirth set to music! Violet thought the laugh very indicative of the character, and her captivation was complete. "Was it not lucky aunt did not forbid me to come to you?" said Eva. "By-the-way, I don't suppose it occurred to her, or she would;" and

again she laughed the sweet laugh. "I could not sleep without welcoming you to your new home; but you have had a long drive, and must be sleepy and tired."

"Neither, since I've seen you, darling; sit down and talk to me;" and, twining her arm around the slender waist, Violet again drew Eva down into the chair. "There, put your feet up;" and she pushed the three-legged stool toward her.

"We are to be sisters, are we not, cousin mine?" asked Eva, affectionately.

"Yes, dear." What pleasure I shall take in imparting my accomplishments to the beautiful rustic, thought Violet; while Eva not only gave her cousin credit for possessing every possible accomplishment, but, what is infinitely beyond all accomplishments, piety; and, poor, innocent child, in her simplicity she eagerly anticipated the nice times they should have singing hymns, reading their Bible, and praying together.

Brought up in the closest seclusion, (in her whole life she had never been beyond the neighboring parish,) her father an Episcopal minister, and living altogether among religious people, or those who professed to be such, it would have surprised Eva as little that her cousin Violet should quit her chamber in the morning without shoes and stockings, as without having said her prayers and read her Bible; the idea of any one's going to bed without asking God's blessing and protection for the night, never for a moment entered her little head.

"Well," she said, finding Violet was quite equal to it, "suppose, then, we begin at once, by reading together?"

"*Reading?* What an idea! I'd rather talk."

"We'll talk to-morrow," said Eva, very sweetly;

"we'll get up early, and take a run round the garden before breakfast; I want to show you my bees and flowers;" and, rising as she spoke, Eva went to the table and began looking over the books. "Where's your Bible, Violet?" she asked, surprised not to see it.

"Bible! Heavens, what do you want with a Bible?"

What a *revelation* was that question to Eva! But, thought she, if she has no religion, poor girl, *this* is her hour to need it; and turning to Violet, the little Raphael, now a sorrowing angel, said,—

"It will be so sweet to unite in our devotions. Well, dear, we will omit the reading to-night; but let us thank God for bringing us together."

"Mercy! I hope she's not a Methodist!" and Violet's castles in the air began to totter.

Returning to the chair, Eva kneeled before it, and looked up at Violet playing with her black-bordered handkerchief. If she must listen to a prayer, Violet would very much have preferred lolling where she was; but she was evidently expected to kneel; and, rising with a lazy sigh, she placed herself beside her cousin. Violet twining her arm around her, and drawing her fondly to her, Eva breathed forth the thoughts of her devout heart so artlessly, so fervently, that, disposed as she was at first to laugh, the tears sprang to Violet's eyes while she listened to the young girl's prayer; and unconscious of having done anything peculiar, dear Eva rose and bade her good-night.

"Une Metoodist, Mademoiselle Eva?" asked Clemence, shrugging her high shoulders, as she assisted Violet to undress.

Though she had taken quite a comfortable nap while the girls were chatting, Clemence was in such a hurry

to get to bed that she forgot to draw in the Venetian blinds or close the curtains, and Violet was awakened by times in the morning by the sun shining in her face.

Remembering her appointment with her cousin, instead of turning over and going to sleep again, as she undoubtedly would under other circumstances, with a lazy yawn, she, springing out of bed, went to the window and threw up the sash. The air was perfectly delicious; trees, grass, hedges, vividly green; everything looking bright and full of life. The gilt arrow on the barn, flashing and sparkling in the sun; the little swallows twittering as they flew in airy circles around it; geese and ducks cackling. A shrill, long-protracted whistle drew her eyes in the direction of the village; a train of cars, darting out of the wood, flew forward on their way to Abbotsford. A soft kiss on her cheek, and a low, sweet laugh, made Violet start. Eva, with a couple of sunbonnets in her hand, was at her side.

"Not dressed?" she said.

"Dressed! Your rude sun, shining in my face, roused me, or I should not have been awake these three hours. I cannot dress myself, you know; and Clemence is as lazy as I am."

"I am my own maid; allow me to assist you;" and, laughing and chatting, Violet's toilet was soon finished, and arm in arm the girls descended to the parlor.

Dr. Morgan was driving from the door; Mrs. Munson had given him his breakfast; and, as it was on the table, the girls postponed their walk until afterwards.

Violet was charmed with all she saw: the flowers, the bees in their glass hives; the clear, calm, broad river at the bottom of the garden, mirroring the fleecy clouds, blue sky, and waving trees. They sat down to rest a

while on the bench, under a clump of noble water-oaks; and, amused by the novelty of everything around her, listening to the rustling of the leaves and busy insect hum, her beautiful cousin's hand in hers, she felt happier than she ever expected to do again. So light of heart for the moment, Violet reproached herself as unfeeling.

On returning to the house, Eva proposed showing her over it. Like most old houses which have been added to as the exigency or whim of the proprietor demanded, it abounded in inconveniently arranged rooms and dismal entries, so sinister and mysterious that Violet, startled by their echoing footsteps, half expected to encounter the ghost of some departed ancestor, when, throwing open a door, Eva ushered her into a cheerful south room, with roses trained around the windows and mignonnette and geraniums growing in pots in the deep window-seat. The transparent muslin curtains blowing about in the breeze, which, stealing the perfume from the roses and mignonnette, and stirring the strings of an Eolian harp in one of the windows, ever and anon rang out fairy-like music. A pretty little tent-like bed; comfortable sofa, with its downy pillows; chairs, large and small, standing about, ready to be dropped into; book-cases, the table, with piles of those marked books her aunt spoke of; writing materials, and the little *et ceteras* which individualize home, so unlike the prim, old-fashioned, *barebone-look* of the other part of the house, delighted and surprised Violet.

"Beloved of the fairies! I presume the little folk do your work?" she said, turning to her cousin with a smile. "No wonder you don't keep a maid."

"I am also my own *fairy*," replied Eva. "Most of these pretty things are presents from Miss Mary Tem-

ple, who kindly assisted me in arranging my room. I chose it for its south aspect. Is not the view pretty?" and Eva drew aside the curtain. Just at that point the river, making a sudden bend, formed a little island, on which was a rustic summer-house under a majestic oak. A little skiff, moored to a stump, was floating with the tide; the green banks, clear stream, and hills beyond,—it was, indeed, a beautiful landscape. Delighted, Violet was about to throw herself into a low bamboo chair by the window,—a glance did not satisfy her,—when, seeing a guitar case under the sofa,—

"Do you play on the guitar, Eva?" and, starting up, she dragged it out; and taking it from the case, placing it in Eva's hand, said, "Come, play for me."

"Some other time;" and blushing, Eva laid the guitar on the sofa.

"Know you not, *Miss*, I am a fairy? *Sing*, or a cat, you shall mew the remainder of your natural life!" Eva laughed. "Choose your color! You wont? Well, ears and claws sprout out!" and Violet stamped her little foot and tried to look alarmingly fierce. "Say, tabby, white or black—which shall it be?"

"Mercy, good fairy!" and Eva took up the instrument, adding, "But indeed you don't know what you are bringing upon yourself; I have had no instructions, but a few lessons from my father, who played by ear."

"I'm prepared for the worst, my dear;" and the lazy girl, throwing herself at full length on the sofa, drew a pillow under her head, and, looking the very personification of indolence,—"*Sing something*," she said, when the waltz was ended.

"What shall I sing?"

"Thy name was once a magic spell." It was a favorite of Willie's; they had often sang it together.

Eva's voice, though untrained in Italian trills, was rich and flexible, and she sang with great natural taste. As Violet listened, the pleased approbatory smile faded, her lip began to quiver, her eyes to fill; and when Eva came to—

"And we, who met so fondly once,
Must meet as strangers *now*,"—

her deep, almost convulsive sob, startled Eva. Supposing her cousin's distress caused by some association connected with her grandmother,—

"Violet, darling," she said, tenderly, "let me sing you what soothes me when I am sad;" and prefacing it by a short symphony, sang—

"My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home on life's rough way,
Oh! teach from my heart to say
Thy will be done.

"Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say
Thy will be done."

She had succeeded, not in awakening a feeling of resignation, but in breaking the chain of painful reminiscences. Violet's tears ceased to flow, and thanking Eva for her sweet music, said she had paid it the very highest compliment by weeping at it; and, pointing to a very ancient-looking tome on the top of the book-case, inquired what it was.

"A portfolio of my father's drawings. Would you like to see them?" and getting upon a high stool, Eva

took it down; and, their chairs drawn up to the table, their heads close together, they were soon busy looking them over.

"I wish, Violet, you had known papa, (Eva's face always wore a sweet pensiveness when she spoke of her father,) he was so kind, so agreeable; he made every subject so clear, so interesting."

Artless and winning, fresh in character, and blythe as a bird, Eva possessed many of the gifts of Wordsworth's Geneveve; and, though like that exquisite creature, she was a "lady of nature's making," yet was Eva much indebted to the excellent father so dearly loved. She was his constant companion, and exemplifying in his own life the beauty of holiness, unconsciously to herself his child grew into a lovely practical Christian.

"This is very beautiful, Eva!" and Violet pointed to a small landscape in water colors. "The delicate foliage; the branches drooping so gracefully over the transparent water; the light and shadow, the gradations of tone so warm, so true to nature; it's a gem."

Eva's cheeks were in a blaze.

"Here's something much prettier," she said, handing her cousin a moonlight scene.

"I deny it. Who is the artist, Eva?" and Violet fixed her eyes upon the truthful face. A respectable artist herself, she was struck with the boldness of outline and depth of coloring.

"You darling!" she cried, starting to her feet and throwing her arms around Eva. "Queen Mab is your godmother, and has enriched you with fairy gifts; living all your life in the country, you sing, and play, and paint, and dance!" and, passing her arm around her waist,—

for Eva had risen too,—humming a waltz, Violet took a few steps; but Eva stood still.

“The little folk don’t polk,” she said, smiling up in Violet’s face: her cousin had the advantage of her in height.

“Eva, are you a Methodist?” Violet’s alarmed look set Eva laughing.

“What an idea!” she replied. “Don’t you know my father was an Episcopal minister?”

* * * * *

“You ask me to describe my newly-found cousin,” wrote Violet to Belle. “Imagine one of Raphael’s angels tripping about in human drapery, laughing the sweetest laugh that ever rang out from the depths of an innocent, merry heart, and saying all sorts of droll things,—in short, whatever chances to bubble up at the moment; yet *dreadfully religious* withal, and, when on that subject, talks as if she was *the oldest inhabitant*—that respectable individual so often quoted in the newspapers. The poor child can’t help being religious; she was brought up by her father, who was a minister. Belle, guess, if you can, the amusement she had carved out for me? A course of morning and evening devotion! But the *first* was our only prayer-meeting. Ridiculous as it seems—shall I confess it?—while listening to her, I actually shed tears. The great ‘*I am*,’ who to me has ever been an awful, undefined mystery, dwelling far away in a misty cloud-world, surrounded by a halo of glory and legions of angels and archangels, is to Eva an ever-present, loving Father, directing every event of life. Leading the dullest, most monotonous existence possible with a crabbed old aunt, in a neighborhood consisting of three or four families, and not a *beau*, her little heart

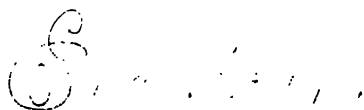
overflows with gratitude for her *many mercies*—pure air, a good table, and extremely plain wardrobe, I suppose, for I see no other. Eva quotes the Bible as Augustus Forbes quotes Shakspeare, only with more taste. I had no idea it contained so many sublime thoughts. When she was speaking of God's love, the other day, I asked her, If such was the case, why we had been so afflicted? We were sitting, at the time, in the deep window-seat in her room, watching the moon rise, a pot of geranium by us. Plucking a leaf,—‘Smell that,’ she said, holding it to my nose. ‘It has no perfume,’ I remarked. Crushing it between her fingers, ‘*Now*, is it not sweet?’ she asked; ‘thus dear, as the poet hath it, “Afflictions wring man’s shy retiring virtues out.” King David, you know, says it was *good* for him to have been afflicted.’ ‘I don’t know King David, dear,’ replied I, laughing. ‘Well, your favorite Longfellow tells us—

“In an earlier age than ours,
The fennel, with its yellow flowers,
Was gifted with the wondrous powers,
Lost vision to restore.
It gave new strength, and fearless mood,
And gladiators, fierce and rude,
Mingled it in their daily food.
Then in life’s goblet freely press
The leaves that give it bitterness;
For in the darkness and distress
New light and strength they give.”

Unlike some of the righteous *we* know, Belle, Eva is not severe in judging others. She finds fault with nobody; her crowning charm is *sweet temper*; and I test her long-suffering famously, I assure you, but have never yet succeeded in making her angry. According to the

old proverb,—‘Evil communications corrupt good manners,’—would it not be droll if, unconsciously contracting this ugly habit of Eva’s of quoting texts, I should sport some of Solomon’s wisdom at the opera? But for this unsightly thread of Puritanism in her poetic mind, the little rustic would be perfectly fascinating.”

Dear Eva considered religion the golden thread that brightened her life, and wished with all her heart she could weave it into her cousin’s; and though Violet did not know it, it was the secret of the cheerful content and the sweet temper she admired so much.



CHAPTER V.

ABBOTSFORD was one of those raw, new, *décharné* villages to be found at most of the railroad stations. Like the rest, it had its smithy, post-office, school-house, apothecary, and *omnium gatherum* shops. As yet, however, it was without a church; indeed, it seemed hardly to require one while there were so many unoccupied pews in the barn-like building but a mile distant, erected before the Revolution. At all events, the good people of Abbotsford appeared to think so, for the ground presented for the purpose remained an open lot; and from year to year the Rev. Mr. Dunbar's congregation continued to increase until the church was now quite full.

Mrs. Munson had a great aversion to strangers, and, as I have before said, was extremely annoyed that the village should butt and bound upon the Elmwood property. But that her dead were sleeping in that old churchyard, she would have vacated her pew. Rather than be stared at by the new comers, she actually changed her seat and listened to the sermon with her *back* to the minister!

Grimes, of the Buck Hotel, Carr Smith, postmaster, and Jones, the owner of the grist-mill, (whose incessant clatter angered Mrs. Munson as much as the whistle of the locomotive,) were the leading men of Abbotsford; Mrs. Carr Smith (Mr. Grimes's daughter) and Mrs. Jones, the leading women. The first shop, and, for some time, the only shop in Abbotsford, was that of the

firm of Jones & Grimes. They were now rich men; poor Mrs. Grimes, manufacturer of the ginger-bread and sausages in the window of the little shop, good soul, was dead; the present Mrs. Jones was a second wife. With the exception of a certain Miss Euphemia Skimpton, who circulated in both localities, there was no intercourse between the country neighborhood and the village.

Mrs. Carr Smith and Mrs. Jones, in passing to and from church, had frequently talked over the matter, and wished for some fortunate chance which might afford them an opportunity of getting a glimpse of Elmwood. That opportunity presented itself in Violet's visit; and accordingly it was agreed between the ladies that the girls—that is, the Misses Jones—should call upon Miss Irving, if the visit was returned. Mrs. Carr and Mrs. Jones would drive over (Mrs. Jones kept her carriage) and invite the family to tea. Bob Saunders, a mill-hand, who officiated as coachman on Sundays, received orders to dress himself in his best suit, be *sure* to put on his gloves—a gentility Bob disliked extremely—and have the carriage at the door punctually at twelve the next day. When Debby, throwing open the parlor door, announced the Misses Jones at Elmwood, Mrs. Munson's knitting dropped from her hand. Growing very red, an alarming scowl upon her brow, she rose from her chair, and without advancing a step, bowed stiffly, resumed her seat, and applied herself to her work as if her livelihood depended upon her industry.

Much amused, Violet watched to see what would come next.

"It *must* be the fashion to stare," thought the unwelcome visitors, "as Miss Irving did." They supposed it was; but the Misses Jones wished it was not, it made

them feel so *very uncomfortable*; and extremely embarrassed, the exaggerated hoops, flounced silks, Honiton lace, and gold bracelets, came to a decided *stand-still* in the middle of the room!

Feeling for their awkward position, dear Eva, always acting out the *golden* rule, threw aside her work, and receiving them very cordially, introduced to her cousin Miss Mollena, (born over the shop, and christened *Nudly*), and in turn, Miss Cleopatra and Miss Victoria. Violet bowed haughtily. The Misses Jones thought the bow superb, and practiced it before the looking-glass, when they returned home. Stumbling into chairs, and playing with their embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, the young ladies industriously studied the involved pattern of the carpet.

"Beautiful weather for driving?" said Eva, addressing Miss Mollena.

"*Very*," whispered the young lady.

"Rather warm in the sun, is it not?" was her next attempt, directed to the pearl-swallowing queen.

"Quite," responded Cleopatra (*sotto voce*.) The Misses Jones considered it *genteel* to speak low.

"*Warm?* it's right down *hot!*" bluntly remarked Vic., in a boisterous tone.

Coloring deeply, the sisters gave the young hoiden a reproving glance; and, playing with the bunch of gold-washed charms appended not to her watch,—the watch was yet to be bought,—but pinned under her basque, turning to Mrs. Munson, Miss Mollena said, in a confidential whisper,—

"Ma sends her love to you, mam, and is sorry she could not come with us; but little Veny has the croup,

and she was afraid to leave her with the servants; Veny's so spoilt, she don't mind anybody but ma."

Blacker grew the scowl, and faster flew the needles, while Mrs. Munson listened to the friendly message. Stopping, and giving the nervous speaker a flash of her keen eyes over her spectacles,—

"*I will excuse the visit*," she said; and dropping her eyes, went on with her knitting.

Miss Mollena colored and looked uneasy, evidently uncertain whether to be angry or not. But she remembered the dresses in progress at home, and her mother's reiterated injunctions, to be *sure* and find out the fashions from Miss Irving.

Following the instruction "*au pied d'lettre*,"—

"Miss Irving," bawled Vic., across the room, "will long waists be worn this summer?" The Misses Jones' were down to their hips.

"Longer than ever," replied the mischievous girl.

"And flowing sleeves?"

"Yes."

"And long skirts?"

"Yes, trailing and dirty;" and Violet glanced at those before her.

"Thank you; I wanted to know, because Mrs. Carr, (she's Mrs. Carr Smith; but we all call her Mrs. Carr,)" and Miss Vic. giggled, as she gave this interesting information,—*"Mrs. Carr bought us beautiful lawns, and summer silks, when she was in Philadelphia last week; and you know it would be a pity not to make them up in the fashion."*

"Reproving and angry glances were lost upon Miss Vic.; she was not to be silenced; and probably apprehending some further disclosures, the sisters rose to take

leave. Miss Mollena was next to Mrs. Munson; and, very much confused, offered, then drew back her hand. Erect and unbending as the pillars of the porch, the mistress of Elmwood stood before her chair,—a slight, very slight, inclination of the head was the only notice she vouchsafed to the retiring guests. Understanding at last the conduct which at first seemed to puzzle her, Mollena flirted angrily passed her, and going up to Violet, and presenting three bony fingers bursting through bright orange kids, said, mincingly,—

“Do come soon; we hope to see a great deal of you; drop in any time.”

Another freezing bow, and “Thank you, I am not visiting;” the words falling like icicles; and, angry as Mrs. Munson, the Misses Jones returned home to inform mamma of the fashions and the rudeness they had received.

“Isn’t that Mr. Dunbar, Eva?” asked Mrs. Munson, who, glad to be rid of the Misses Jones, had gone to the window and was looking after the yellow carriage as it rolled down the avenue; “how comes it he’s walking?”

Eva ran out to the old minister, and Mrs. Munson met him at the door.

“A glass of water, if you please, my dear?” said he to Eva, as he sank panting into the chair Mrs. Munson rolled forward for him.

“Wine, Eva; here are the side-board keys;” and taking them out of her pocket, Mrs. Munson handed them to Eva.

“No, thank you; I am only out of breath; the walk was too long for me; I shall be better presently;” and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, handing Eva

back the tumbler, he said, very sadly, "I could not go away without coming to bid you good-bye."

The venerable minister was for years as much a fixture in the parish as his church; Mrs. Munson would as soon have expected the mossy belfry to call to take leave.

"Going! where are you going to?" she inquired, exceedingly surprised.

"God only knows!" replied Mr. Dunbar, in a tone of hopeless, helpless distress.

Eva,—with that look of a sorrowing angel, which struck Violet so much the first evening she saw her,—hanging over his chair, took the old man's hand in hers; and, when with a sigh he added, his voice trembling as he spoke,—“I sent in my resignation yesterday,”—bursting into tears, sobbed out, “Oh! Mr. Dunbar, you are not going to leave us?”

“God bless you, my child!” and as he spoke the old minister laid his hand on her head caressingly. “Go where I will, never shall I forget *you*, Eva, or the kindness I have received in this house.”

Going! where are you going to?” asked Mrs. Munson, almost fiercely. She always spoke as if in a violent passion, when her feelings were touched. Strange woman! and scolded, too, dreadfully, all the while she was performing the kindest actions.

For instance, on one occasion, when a child was choking with a thimble in its throat, which would not go down, and as obstinately refused to come up, poke at it as they would,—getting blacker and blacker in the face, and everybody around pitying the *dear* little thing and the *poor* mother,—thrusting aside the sympathizers, and

telling the mother she was a fool for leaving the thimble where the child could get it, Mrs. Munson grasped it by its little fat legs, and, looking as if she was going to dash its brain out, shook it furiously. Out popped the thimble on the floor! the child's life was saved, and Mrs. Munson pronounced, by all present, a *cruel, unfeeling* creature, to speak so crossly to the mother when her child was almost in a fit! Under the delusion that she was a strong-minded female, and this *dry-eyed* line of conduct proved it, though deeply grieved as Eva at the idea of parting with her old friend, Mrs. Munson did not, nor would not shed a tear; if he had been dying, she would have pretended her eyes were *weak*.

"I have been strangely obtuse," responded the minister, in reply to Mrs. Munson's question.

Mr. Dunbar did himself injustice; it was not obtuseness; guileless old man, he was as unsuspecting and simple-hearted as a child.

"I observed," he proceeded, "that many of my people did not come to church as they were wont to do; but I concluded they, or some of their little ones, were sick; feeble and old, I cannot attend to parochial duty as I could wish; and by the time I got to see them they were well. The young folks chose to be married by the bishop or some clerical friend; but people will have their fancies, and I thought nothing of it. The infants were not presented for baptism, which, I own, troubled me; and when I remonstrated with the parents, they answered rudely; but a rough set, I concluded they knew no better. The boys, too, would not come to be catechised, and were often far from respectful in their deportment toward me; but boys will be boys; thoughtless, hair-brained fellows, I didn't suppose they meant

anything by it. I had been followed and courted in my day, and, as I pondered it all in my heart, I said with righteous Job,—‘Shall I receive good, and not evil also, at the hand of the Lord?’ A sinful man, I felt I deserved more chastening than I received.”

“I *knew* how it would be, when those people came into the parish,” said Mrs. Munson; “I told you they would do all the mischief they could.”

Evidently distressed by the temper she exhibited, Mr. Dunbar remarked mildly,—

“They have treated me badly, but I forgive them.”

“*The wretches!* if you *do*, I do not; they saw they could trample on you, and they have done it. Forgive them indeed!”

“Yes you *will*, my friend; and ere you repeat,—‘Forgive us our trespasses *as we* forgive those who trespass against us.’ You would not, by the bitter alchemy of an unforgiving spirit, change our blessed Lord’s *prayer* into a *malediction?*”

“When they ask my forgiveness, I will not withhold it; but so far from regretting, the low creatures are perfectly triumphant at the success of their machinations.”

“We are not now in the dispensation of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” said Mr. Dunbar; “but in the *blessed* reign of *love*; ‘though our brother offend seventy times seven, we are to forgive him, and pray for those who spitefully use and abuse us.’ But I was telling you the course the vestry took to enlighten my obtuseness; they began by cutting my salary down to so small a sum that, that—the old man could hardly bring it out—I was obliged to sell Snowdrop.”

“Poor old Snowdrop!” sobbed Eva.

Mrs. Munson looked angry enough to box the reverend gentleman's ears. She was going to ask why he had not acquainted her with the facts before; but she remembered her generosity, and the old minister's shrinking delicacy, and left the question unasked.

"But that is not all," continued Mr. Dunbar, with more animation than Violet supposed him capable; "in despair, at my equanimity, they let loose a pack of noisy workmen upon me, to mend an imaginary leak in the roof of the Parsonage. I say imaginary, for I examined the ceiling carefully and could find no evidences of one. The clatter of hammers, and running up and down stairs and through the house, almost crazed me; but it could not last long, and I bore it as well as I could. Yesterday I was in my study writing, and hearing a chopping, went to the window to ascertain what it could be. Mrs. Munson, judge my feelings when I saw one of the trees before the door, planted by my own hand, watered and watched, from a little slip, and, in my lonely-heartedness, loved almost as a child, felled to the ground;" and his voice trembled as he added, "when I looked at it lying there, fresh and green, in full leaf, and then at the hacked stump, the truth, the humiliating truth, flashed upon me! I understood it *all*; a system of *petty insults and persecutions* to drive me from the parish! but it is not the act of the parish. Thank God, the friends of my youth have not deserted me; but I did not think of it then. I fear, at the moment, I forgot the meekness which should characterize a follower of Christ; but I knew where to go for a better spirit. I locked my study door, and on my knees prayed for grace to forgive as I would be forgiven; and, I trust, the letter I wrote, ten-

dering my resignation, was not unbecoming a Christian minister."

The scarlet spots on Mrs. Munson's cheeks grew brighter and brighter as she listened.

"Infamous wretches!" she muttered; "they deserve to be hung. As you say, for the last two years it has been a cruel systematic persecution."

"Yet have I not been scourged, spat upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to the accursed tree. My dear, kind friend, let us never forget that prayer of love uttered in the mortal agony which wrung from our blessed Lord a cry that made the sun grow black, earth cleave asunder, and awakened the dead,—'*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*' Amazing love! My friend, religion is *love*, Heaven is *love*, God is *love*; and if we would prove that our religion is the religion of Christ, if we desire to share the bliss of Heaven, to dwell with Him there, we must strive to fulfil the law of *love* on earth; to *love* even as Christ loved."

He was silent a few minutes; when he spoke again it was to Eva.

"Eva, my child, you will be pleased to hear that your Sunday scholar cannot be laughed out of saying his catechism, though the dear little fellow is often the only boy at the altar." And while discussing Jemmie Green, dinner was announced.

Mrs. Munson insisted upon taking Mr. Dunbar home in the carriage, thus securing a long private conversation; and Violet, who began to understand the eccentric, was sure the poor old minister's future was the subject. Gentlemanly, genial, and simple-hearted, he won Violet's love in that short visit. Abounding in general information, it was delightful the way he talked of his flowers,

his cat, good Hannah, and those little runagates who had behaved so rudely to him, good man. Their unkindness was forgotten; you would have thought they were his children. The next Sunday was his last in the parish to which, fifty years ago, he came a young man. Few ministers, perhaps, were ever more popular than Mr. Dunbar. The parsonage had been built for him; and very dear was the good old man to his country neighbors. It was the people of Abbotsford, or the Abbotsforders, as Mrs. Munson called them, who, wearying of the oft-repeated sermons, were sending him out into the world to seek a home to die in. The wife of his youth slept beneath the dark cypress in the graveyard, with Mrs. Munson's dead.

Sunday was a day of great excitement in the parish. The church was thronged to hear the farewell sermon. When the vestry-room door opened and Mr. Dunbar came out, you might have heard the fall of a pin; but feeble and old, though he looked wan as if he had risen from the dead to bid farewell, he went through the service as usual. Once or twice his voice trembled slightly, and those who watched him closely observed a twitching of the muscles of his face. In ascending to the pulpit, he was obliged to sustain himself by the banisters.

Some time he remained with his head bowed upon his clasped hands, engaged in prayer, his long white hair falling over the great Bible and crimson cushion. When he raised it, the emotion, no longer to be concealed, was visible on his flushed face; and passing his handkerchief quickly across his eyes,—

“Beloved,” began the discarded minister, “I am not here to preach to you. My teachings are ended. I stand *here to-day* to bless you ere I go hence; to bid you fare-

well. My aged fellow-pilgrims, ye with whom I have taken sweet counsel while traveling on our homeward way to a better land, whose kindness and affection I have often thanked my God for, as one of the chief blessings of my life, we part, I trust, friends. May the Lord God of Hosts bless, lead, and keep you the short distance we have yet to go; ay, keep and abundantly bless you unto your life's end. And you, my children,—whom I have borne in my arms and in my heart, whom I have presented to God, at this altar,—may the grace of the Lord God Almighty strengthen you against temptation in these evil days, and enable you to pass unscathed through whatever trials His unerring wisdom may see fit to allot you; may the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit rest upon, and remain with you, *now and for evermore!* And you, my dear little ones, lambs in the fold of Christ, remember——”

But, becoming deathly pale, he stopped suddenly and sank on the bench behind him. His voice—low and tremulous at first, rising with excitement until every word could be distinctly heard in the remotest part of the church—was gone. A long, anxious, breathless pause followed. At last he rose and attempted to proceed, but could not; and, extending his trembling hands over the heads of his persecutors, raising his tearful eyes to Heaven, in *silence* he gave the unuttered benediction. There was not a dry eye in the church. For some minutes no one stirred. Everybody remained standing. Mrs. Munson was the first to quit her pew. Looking taller and fiercer than ever, in her wrath, striding up to the pulpit, she stood scowling round on the dispersing congregation; and, as the old minister tottered down the steps,

holding on by the banisters, she caught him by the arm, and linking it in hers, said,—

“Come home with me;” and she spoke loud enough to be heard by all around. “*While I have, you shall never want.*”

“Not to-day, not to-day!” replied Mr. Dunbar, in a hoarse whisper, deeply affected; and disengaging his arm, taking both her hands in his, pressed them affectionately.

“*Wretches, they have murdered you!*” And Mrs. Munson fixed her eagle eyes upon the nearest offenders.

Mr. Dunbar looked distressed. “*Love your enemies,*” he would have said; but ere the last words were uttered, the blood gushed in a stream from his mouth, and, catching at the altar railings, he fell at her feet.

With a cry of horror, Mrs. Munson strove to raise him; a scene of the wildest confusion ensued; those nearest pressed round the dying man; those who had left the church, came back; others rushed from the fearful scene; children screamed, women shrieked. Mrs. Wallingford fainted. Very much attached to Mr. Dunbar, she had hastened home to hear the farewell sermon. The sexton ran for the Doctor; but Mrs. Munson saw nothing but the dying minister weltering in his blood at her feet.

“Away with you!” she cried, as Mr. Jones and Mr. Higgins approached. “Lay not a finger upon the poor, harmless old man you have murdered. This is *your* work; you’ve broken the kindest heart that ever beat; so full of love;” and her stern, sharp voice grew husky. “But for *you*, these gray hairs and shrunken limbs would have gone down in peace to the grave;” and, seating herself on the floor, she took the old man’s head on her

lap, and as she bent over him to wipe the blood from his ashy lips, a tear fell upon the corpse-like face; but the poor old minister did not know it; his eyes were closed, the blood flowing copiously from his mouth.

His friends soon gathered round him. Gently, very gently, they raised him in their arms and bore him across the churchyard to the Parsonage, the lonely home where he had suffered so much, with none to sympathize, none to speak a word of comfort. The noble-hearted old man thanked God!—ay, often and often with all his heart—that his sensitive, beloved wife, was sleeping in the quiet grave, and spared his anxieties and trials. The heavy footsteps resounded through the silent house, as they brought the body in and laid it on the bed. The patient spirit had taken flight—the weary was at rest!

“Poor old man!” sighed Mrs. Munson, as she closed his half-open eyelids; “those lips never spoke but in kindness.”

“*Sure*, an’ it’s God’s *trut*,” sobbed Hannah, wiping her eyes with her apron as she stood holding by the bedstead post, gazing at her dead master.

The noise of their coming in had brought her from the kitchen; she could not realize that he was *really* dead. He that, as she said, had walked out of that door so well but an hour ago!

“*Sure*,” continued the faithful creature, “the dear soul loved *everything* that had breath in it, down to the dumb *bastes*; *everything at all at all*. Only last night, when he was a-paying me my wages and I a-crying for *myself* as well as for he,—*faith* and *troth* it’s many a day afore I’ll *git sich* a home *agin*,—he *gin* me this;” and, putting her hand in her pocket, she drew forth a dollar. ‘Hannah,’ says he to me, in a sort of a choky way,

‘keep this to remember me, and take puss home *wid ye* and be *kind* to her for her *ould* master’s sake; you’ve bin a faithful servant to me, God bless ye;’” and, covering her face with her apron, Hannah continued her sobbing and lamentations.

The funeral was the largest ever seen in that part of the country; people came from far and near to it, and so long were they in collecting, that the sun had set when the procession moved from the door—luckily, they had not far to go.

The graveyard—a melancholy spot, even with the sunlight streaming brightly through the thick unpruned cypress, willow, and the yew trees; now, with the twilight deepening over it, the old tombstones, cracked and overgrown with moss, half sunken in the ground, the new looking ghastly and startlingly white among the tall, rank grass, wet with the mist rising from the river,—was, indeed, a dreary resting-place. The wind sighed mournfully among the trees, and ever and anon there came a vivid flash of lightning, followed by deep-muttered thunder; the frogs croaked in the pond back of the graveyard, and the crickets cried shrilly in the vines on the old stone wall; the bats, flying round in circles, almost touched the faces of the pall-bearers, as they walked slowly up the wide gravel-walk to the church. Many present remembered the tenant of that narrow coffin when the cherished pastor of a loving flock, walking up that path with his young bride hanging on his arm. They remembered, too, the meek submission with which the childless old man laid her, two years ago, beneath the cypress, where the newly opened grave now awaited him; and they could not but think what his *feelings* must have been when he tottered along that

gravel path the preceding Sunday to preach his farewell sermon. Ah! those who set the stone in motion cannot foresee, as it descends the hill, what crushing force it may gather in the rolling; and thus with persecution; now, that it was too late, even Jones and Higgins wished they had not been so hard upon the old man.

Dust to dust, ashes to ashes! The clods fell heavily on the coffin; the crowd closed around the grave, and among the rest, edging his way through, a sickly-looking boy, with a tattered straw hat, clambered upon the bank of damp earth and looked down into the grave; though the little fellow's patched sleeve was often passed hastily across his eyes, a sweet smile was upon his lip, for Jemmie Green was thinking how glad he was that he had always been respectful and polite to the old minister.

Good old Mr. Dunbar was at rest. A subscription was opened for a tombstone, and a meeting of the vestry called to appoint his successor; but, divided between high and low church, after a pompous speech from Mr. Grimes, a longer one from Mr. Jones, in which most of the long words were mispronounced, a facetious reply from Mr. Carr Smith, and a great deal of wrangling, the meeting adjourned *sine die*, having agreed to submit the matter to the bishop of the diocese.

Meanwhile, life passed very quietly at Elmwood; so quietly, Eva was afraid, now the novelty had passed, her cousin would tire of the monotony of the country.

A passionate lover of flowers, Eva had vainly tried to set her digging and delving; but in her awkwardness Violet tore her dress, scratched her hands with the thorns, and, disgusted with the squirming earth-worms and miserable from her insane apprehension of freckles, her face buried in a long sun-bonnet, soon sank on a garden

chair in the shade of a magnificent tulip-tree; and comfortably established there, she watched Eva at work; but tiring of that, quickly returned to the house. Walking was almost as much out of the question. Violet never stirred out that a dog did not bark at her, a vicious cow look as if it was going to toss her on its horrid horns, a horse prance by and almost run over her, a toad leap on her foot, or a bee or wasp get on her bonnet, or, worse still, some shocking spider conceal itself in her dress and sting her dreadfully. Besides, the stones bruised her feet sadly and tore her thin French boots, (and, unaccustomed to the country, she had provided herself with no other.) Then, too, her skirts got muddy and dragged; and driving in the rough roads was quite as alarming. Dora had galloped over twice since her return, but unfortunately, on each occasion, Violet had missed her: the first time she was out on one of those perilous drives, over deep ruts, large stones, and wooden bridges moving under the horses' feet as they passed over; the next, Eva and herself had gone to the bower with their books and guitar, and, hearing how they were engaged, Dora declined joining the party.

Eva was very proud of her bower: a cool wilderness of shade, formed by the interlacing boughs of a clump of horse-chestnuts, elms, oak, and silver ash; a wild grape twining and twisting itself fantastically among the branches, formed on one side a leafy screen, impervious to the eyes of passers-by, if any there should happen to be; in a grassy path, used only by the domestics of the family; its carpet, short velvet sward, fresh and green, brightened with glimmerings of sunshine, which came checkering through the waving boughs overhead; the furniture, a low table and a couple of

rustic chairs, made of twigs with the bark on, twisted fancifully together—Joe's handy-work. Such was the bower where, of a summer's afternoon, Eva spent many an hour with her books, guitar, and pencil; vistas cut through the trees afforded beautiful views of the surrounding landscape. That which Violet had admired so much was before her,—the clear water, trees, and glowing sky,—save that now the boughs, dipping in the water, ever and anon rose and waved over it as the wind danced through them. Violet had not expressed half her delight, when Debby came to say that Miss Temple was at the house. As Eva predicted, Violet was charmed with Miss Mary, though at the present moment she would rather she had remained at home. Not so Eva; handing Violet Cranford, which they had been laughing over, and brought with them to finish, and snatching up the guitar, she tripped gaily back to the house, happy at the thought of seeing dear Miss Mary.

Young and old loved Miss Mary. There was nothing very marked about her appearance, excepting that without being at all prim or precise, her dress was always fresh and exquisitely neat; cheerful, affectionate, gentle, and sympathetic, she entered at once into what her *friends* happened to be doing, or feeling. With Miss Mary, the gilding never wore off from the chain of friendship: she resented no petty slights and fancied unkindness; never snapped its links asunder by outbreaks of temper, thus "making empty places around the heart's once crowded hearth; friends the grave doth not cover, whose graves the grass doth not grow over, yet are they gone, gone from us *forever*." Miss Mary had no such aching voids to weep over. It was her

boast,—if we could imagine Miss Mary *boasting*,—and a proud boast it was, that she never *lost a friend*.

Uncle Harry (the sobriquet by which the brother was known among his intimates) was with her. Violet had never had the pleasure of seeing him before; but it did not require much time to make the bachelor's acquaintance; he could be read at a glance. He was very fond of young ladies,—pretty ones especially,—and amused with his faded gallantries, Violet and Uncle Harry were at once on the best possible terms. A man of leisure, having nothing to do but to cherish the curling locks that fringed the bald space on the top of his head and jauntily cut imperial (of a most suspicious reddish-purple tinge,) and write execrable verses, (he was always scribbling.) Delighted in the anticipation of a flirtation, every woman at all polite to him he believed to be desperately in love with his fascinating person or brilliant talents. Murad the Unlucky never was guilty of greater or more frequent blunders than Uncle Charley. If there was a subject above all others which should not be touched upon, Uncle Charley was sure to introduce it; if he happened to be in company with a lady who was married twice, he invariably called her by the name of her first husband; and woe be to the corns in his proximity, for he never went up to speak to any one that he did not tread on their toes; and as to *teacups* and *plates*, the lady of the house trembled for her china when in Uncle Charley's hands.

The Temples' carriage was not out of the avenue when Mrs. Wallingford and her husband drove to the door; I say Mrs. Wallingford and her husband, for everybody in the neighborhood did. Poor man, though extremely *gentlemanly* and pleasing, he did look as if his life had

been passed in an intensely hot dressing-room, sympathizing with an ill wife; his velvet tread would not have frightened away a mouse, and his subdued, sweet voice, had something quite lulling and somniferous in it. The ill wife, in a stylish wrapper, with the last new novel in her hand, was always on the sofa; every chink and crevice stuffed or listed, to keep out the air and prevent the *possibility* of a draft; a large wood-fire (she could not stand coal) blazing on the hearth, when the air without was balm and the thermometer standing at sixty. Fresh as a rose and plump as a partridge, a bundle of shawls tripped lightly up the steps and into the parlor, and, on being introduced, shaking hands with Violet, assured her her nerves were so dreadfully shattered and she so miserable an invalid, that nothing would have induced her to venture the long drive but the anxiety she felt to welcome Mrs. Munson's niece to their quiet neighborhood. She forgot, poor lady, though the slamming of a door would throw her into hysterics or bring on a most extraordinary state of insensibility, which she termed fainting, (during which, strange to say, she could distinctly remember whatever passed,) yet that she always found health and energy for any little frolic she fancied. Mrs. Munson was very urgent that they should remain to dinner, but Mrs. Wallingford declined, protesting she would love to do so, but it was quite out of the question; she was even now all in a tremor, and would, she was sure, be obliged to go to bed the moment she got home.

"Mr. Wallingford, your arm!" and the languid lady rose slowly from her chair.

The husband, who looked much more as if he needed a support, begging Eva to excuse him, broke off in the

middle of a sentence, and flew to the assistance of his delicate wife.

* * * * *

A letter had been received from the bishop, stating that the Rev. Allen Eubank had accepted the call to Abbotsford; the village was on the tip-toe of expectation. Miss Skimpton, who always prognosticated the worst that could happen, and somehow or other, after it did happen, though she did not like to say so, *knew* that it would turn out *exactly as it did*, said she was sure nobody would like to be lectured and sermonized at by a young man of six or seven and twenty. For her part, she thought it great presumption for him to undertake to direct and find fault with people older than himself; ministers always did. Mrs. Carr, not being a spinster, and having no marriageable daughters, did not express much interest about the matter. But Mrs. Jones, who had heard that the new rector was not only handsome but *rich*, was as positive as Miss Skimpton, that *he would be extremely popular*. The vestry had not been idle; they had had another meeting, the result, that the Parsonage was to be new carpeted and in part refurnished; a handsome, rich young man, could not be expected to be content with rickety chairs and dingy paper. Paper-hangers, white-washers, and painters were in requisition. Mr. Jones measured off the carpets, and the Dorcas offered to make them up; and it was quite amusing to see Miss Skimpton with her specks on, seated à la Turk on the floor, surrounded by the girls; Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Carr, going round matching figures and fitting seams; and as the young ladies plied their needles, to hear them guessing *who* would be the future mistress of the Parsonage, and have the care of those

pretty carpets, laughing and blushing and running one another, protesting "Not *me!* oh! no!" and hoping all the while it might be. Then, Miss Skimpton mislaid her scissors, and made all the girls get up to see if they were not sitting on them, and after all found them under her own gown; whereupon Vic. Jones grew facetious, and stole the spinster's skein of black thread, and, winking to the others, slyly passed it round Miss Phemy's neck,—the girls giggling and keeping their eyes on their work, for fear of betraying its whereabouts; and hunting for thread, Miss Phemy lost her needle, which Vic. kindly replaced with an enormous pin, and everybody shouted to see Miss Phemy's efforts to thread it,—Vic. having bet her she could not do it without her specks; which specks, the spinster assured them, she wore only because her eyes were *weak*, and proved it by mistaking a headless pin for a needle! A merry time the Dorcas had making the carpets.

But the rector has come! The vestry and wardens met him at the depot, and conducted him to his future home. Sunday, too, has come; and the bell in the old belfry ringing out its solemn invitation, people on foot were wending their way through the woods and along the green lanes; people in carriages and all manner of vehicles, hastening churchward.

"That is our family burial place, Violet; your mother's grave is the one to the left; the new tombstone is my brother's;" and Mrs. Munson pointed, as she spoke, to a cluster of graves inclosed within a neat iron railing.

Violet looked from the carriage window to the spot indicated, and shuddered that any one related to her should lay, even in death, in so dismal a spot. The sunshine seemed to slant away from the dark cypresses as if

afraid to penetrate their mysterious gloom, and the long, white marble slabs looked almost corpse-like, stretched out beneath the dim shade. Yet was there a sad picturesqueness, too, about that neglected country churchyard, with its old stone wall, covered with green moss in places, and crumbling away; in others, stones falling out, and where they had fallen weeds springing up, overrun with vines, a perfect nest of crickets, that sang there the livelong day. The mossy belfry and clumsy church, rusty, weather-stained, and vine-draped, with its long, arched windows, were quite in keeping with the sombre graveyard and dilapidated wall. Sympathizing with the persecuted minister the previous Sunday, and occupied in discussing his wrongs, Violet had not noticed either them or the pretty Parsonage, nestled close beside it, and separated from the church only by a high hedge, or the low shed, now fast filling with horses harnessed ready to be attached to the various vehicles standing about under the trees, as soon as the service was over,—gigs, buggies, Jersey-wagons, carriages, and market-wagons, pressed into service for the occasion. Men, women, and children, odd-looking as their vehicles, in groups, stopping for a moment to shake hands and chat. Had she ascended with Jack, on his bean-vine, to the moon, everything could not have been more new and strange to her; but she had to follow her aunt and cousin; and after glancing round the church, seated herself so as to obtain a view of the congregation as they came flocking in; and while Eva was devoutly reading the Psalms, she was watching for the Misses Jones, when her attention was attracted, and, considering the place, I am ashamed to say, her mirth excited, by a very pretentious person—
an exaggeration of the present exaggerated style—strut-

ting up the middle aisle; but though ladies may, pew doors do not, extend with the vagaries of fashion, and Mrs. Carr Smith was effectually barred out by her hoops! Very red and very angry, she tried a side-long squeeze, but the obstinate whalebones puffed up alarmingly in her face; then a decided smash, but with as little success. Nothing but a hasty retreat was left her, and jerking down her black imitation-lace veil, her slow, consequential shake changed into a half run, Mrs. Carr hurried home, leaving the lookers-on convulsed with laughter.

Remembering "Where two or three are gathered together, there will *I be* in their midst," like Moses at the burning bush, Eva felt the spot was holy ground, and consequently endeavored to lay aside every secular thought, and, her eyes on her book, lost the sight. The Misses Jones came at last, caricatures of themselves, followed by ma and pa; ma in a green moire antique, literally tied up in her white embroidered crape shawl, a bright canary-colored bonnet, with white ostrich feathers, the scarlet velvet flowers in the cap contrasting with her freckled face. The mamma waddled up the aisle, taking short, wriggling steps to keep pace with the six-footer, tall and rough of exterior, looking very like a human brother of the firs before the church.

"Longitude and latitude," whispered Violet to Eva.

But the witticism did not provoke a smile; Eva's sweet, serious face bent down over her book, I am not at all sure she heard it; and Violet did not care whether she did or not; her eyes were on another droll object,—the round, rosy mother of a family, hustling in her little brood into the pew behind them. Settling herself comfortably in the corner, she beckoned the eldest to her, and seizing it by the arms, plumped it down on the seat

beside her, and stretching over, jerked first one and then another child into its place, and taking off the cap of the three-years-old, all *eyes* and *pantaloon*s, smashed it down on the low stool at her feet, the little chap making shocking faces, and keeping the other children in a giggle, though the mother frowned and shook her head at them, the living representative of a toy mandarin. The bell ceased its tolling; the vestry-room door opened; every eye was on the new rector.

"Heavens, Eva, how handsome! the most intellectual face I ever beheld!" whispered Violet. "So pale and benignant; I abhor a *fat, florid* minister; the man's superb!"

"Violet, read the motto over the pulpit," responded Eva, in a guarded whisper; and Violet did read, and loud enough to be heard in the next pew.

"The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him!" Encountering Eva's anxious, reproving glance,—

"You *are a Methodist*," she said. "*Why did you deny it?* I haven't the least doubt you shout, too, when the discourse is moving. He looks as if he might be *pathetic*, so I'll move my seat before you begin;" and, true enough, crossing to the other side of the square, uncomfortable, high box, still to be met in old country churches, and in St. Peters, in Philadelphia, she smiled behind her book at Eva.

Poor Eva, how it pained her to hear her cousin's light tone, *breaking*, even while responding to the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!"

The young minister read most impressively. The earnest supplications seemed the spontaneous language

of his own heart. His countenance, his manner, the solemnity of his rich, deep voice, were calculated to solemnize the most frivolous. The text chosen for the occasion was Corinthians, chapter xii. verse 15: "I am determined to know *nothing* among you, save Christ and *him* crucified." Boldly did the young man declare the truth, and in a style so simple, it was evident it was the *gospel*, and not *himself* he desired to preach. His illustrations were striking, at times thrilling, in their simplicity. In alluding to the awful scene enacted in the church but a few Sundays past, he reminded his hearers that they, too, might be called as suddenly to appear before the bar of God; and besought them, as one who would have to give an account of their souls, to flee from the wrath to come. Eva's eyes filled; it was just so her father preached. Violet was thinking that one so handsome and talented would be an interesting *lover*. Mrs. Munson thought neither of the man nor his sermon. She had just been informed by Miss Skimpton that Mrs. Jones intended to give a party, by way of introducing the new minister to his parishioners, and, disagreeable as it would be to have the Abbotsforders at her house, she had made up her mind if Mr. Eubank was to be introduced, it should not be by Mrs. Jones; and planning an interview with the young minister before Mrs. Jones could have an opportunity to give her invitation, she heard little that was said.

"We shall have prayer meetings," remarked Mrs. Jones, sneeringly, to Miss Euphemia Skimpton, as soon as the congregation was dismissed.

"He had better ascertain, first, if anybody will attend them," responded Miss Phemy, in the same tone.

"What splendid eyes he has!" exclaimed Mollena, rolling up her rayless orbs.

"And beautiful white hands!" chimed in Cleopatra.

"Don't be making dunces of yourselves, girls; neither of you'll catch him," said Vic. "His splendid eyes were constantly on the Munson pew. I don't believe he saw one of us or anybody else."

Mrs. Munson was not the only one who meditated an introductory tea. Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Carr Smith, equally ambitious and more politic than their friend, Mrs. Jones, kept their secret to themselves, lingered in church, each hoping to be the *first*.

Laying aside his bands, and hanging up his surplice in the closet in the vestry-room, Eubank, unconscious of the honor awaiting him, quitting the church by a side door, was walking slowly down the gravel path along which his predecessor had so lately been carried to his last resting-place, thinking of the poor old man, when, as he got to the gate, Mrs. Munson, an able calculator of chances, pounced upon and secured the prize!

CHAPTER VI.

THE contemplated tea was a *serious affair*. Determined it should be understood in Abbotsford that it was not intended as a compliment to the village, but to the minister, Mrs. Munson declared she would ask every living soul in the congregation, from the pastor down to the sexton. The man drank, to be sure, but he was not a fool; he'd keep sober for the occasion. The notice was inconveniently short, considering a parish was to be feasted, and no other assistant to be obtained but that of Minda, the itinerant pastry cook, who went out by the day manufacturing very mediocre cakes and pies. The party was to come off on Monday evening; and the family up by times, prayers and breakfast were hurried over. But anxious as she was to get to work, Mrs. Munson remained to wash up the cups. She said she could tell when they were left to the servants; the handles were always sure to be dirty; she never drank tea at those houses. Her standing excuse at the Wallingfords' was, that she had a late dinner.

When the ladies went into the kitchen, after breakfast, they found Minda fussing round, weighing out butter, flour, &c. Eva had a great deal to do, helping everybody, besides arranging the parlors and dressing the flower-pots. Violet was a looker-on. The part assigned her at home, on such occasions, was to fill out the cards. Here were no cards to fill out. This was a new phase of life to her; and, amazed at the trouble involved,

she wondered people ever should have company; and accomplished and superior a person as Miss Irving was, feeling very ignorant, and rather in the way, she had serious thoughts of absconding, when, happening to glance toward a corner in the farther end of the kitchen, she encountered an object that put to flight all other ideas and set her off in a perfect gale of fun. Minda's daughter,—a tall slip of a girl, dressed in a brilliant calico and white apron, the little woolly knots, which usually gave to her head the appearance of a sooty chimney, scratched out and sleeked down, as she elegantly expressed it, with bergamot pomade that perfumed the premises,—in a corner with the marble mortar in her lap, demurely pounding spice.

"Heavens, Eva!" Violet could scarcely speak for laughing; "the creature is the *very twin* of Mrs. Ives's knocker,—puffy cheeks, flat nose; the very color!"

Minda was black as a coal; Jemima a mulatto. Very hard had Eva tried to break Violet of this profane habit of exclaiming "Heavens" upon all occasions. Personal ridicule she considered a breach of the *law of love*, and never encouraged it by laughing when she could help it, though making very merry over *things*, as she would with the aforesaid queer knocker, had she seen it unconnected with poor Jemima, or Mima, as Minda called her daughter. Violet understood full well the rebuke conveyed in the grave shake of the head, as Eva hurried off in search of the nutmeg Mrs. Munson was seeking. Debby was frothing eggs; the operation appeared simple enough; and, convinced she could accomplish that, at least, Violet offered her assistance; but, easy as it seemed, it was beyond her abilities; the harder she beat, the flatter grew the whites, and, her arm aching, she

handed back the dish to the girl with a weary, disgusted sigh. There was magic in Debby's touch; in a few minutes the eggs were in a beautiful curd, and, called away at the moment, she asked Violet to stir them into the sugar and yolks in the bowl on the table. Without designating which bowl,—for there were two, both with very much the same sort of yellow mixture,—and thoughtless as Debby, resting the dish on the edge of the nearest, as the froth slipped in, Violet stirred away, happy to be occupied.

"Stop, stop!" screamed Mrs. Munson from the other end of the kitchen.

"Oh, Miss!" cried Debby, running to Violet with a frightened look, "the whites is in them aready; *faith* and troth, it was *jist t'other* one I *mained*."

Coming to the table, and leaning with both hands upon it, Mrs. Munson gave an angry flash of her sharp eye up over her spectacles at Violet, and then down into the bowl, as she said in a desponding tone,—

"Cake and custard both spoiled, and no more eggs in the house! *What am* I to do?"

Not that Mrs. Munson was asking advice; that she never condescended to do under any circumstances; the question was thrown out in a sort of parenthesis; an expletive to prove *she* and the *custard* were equally injured. Poor Violet felt as if she was the greatest criminal out of Moyamensing Prison.

"Are you sure, Debby," asked the aggrieved lady, "that you brought *all* the eggs from the fowl-house?"

"*Sure!* and fait an' I'd laid down my life for it there aint one more, but jist them you *tould* me to *kape* to set the speckled hen on;" and Debby's eyes were large as saucers, her face red as her hair.

"Miss Munson," and coming to the table, shovel in hand, (Minda was raking the coals out of the oven,) setting her arms a kimbo, and scorching her gown, "*We* pastry-cooks has to keep eggs on han'; I can let you hab some if you'll give me my price."

Minda's percentage was extortionate; Mrs. Munson told her so; but, glad to get them at any price, for once she consented to be cheated, and handing Jemima the key of the closet,—

"Go, git dem, Mima," said the consequential pastry-cook, "and *min'* you don't stay; run all de way, an if you fall down, don't wait to git up."

Minda was as fond of her joke as Dr. Morgan. The girl snatched her sun-bonnet from behind the door where she had thrown it, and was hastening off, when a nail, which for the last week had torn everybody's apron or dress that happened to pass it, (and on each occasion Rose, the cook, blaming herself for not doing so before, protested she would drive it in as soon as she had finished what she was then about, and as often forgot to do it,) caught Mima's frock, and tore an alarming hole in it.

"Drat de ting!" muttered Mima, stopping short, and disconsolately eyeing the great three-cornered rent in the brilliant calico.

"Wot you stan' dare for, *you varmant!*" and Minda made an unmistakable demonstration with the shovel; whereupon, dropping her dress, Mima fled.

Borrowing Debby's scissors, Eva took from the snowy dresser, glittering with blue and white India china, a small basket, and proposed to Violet to go into the garden to gather flowers for the vases. Violet, ever with *the* fear of freckles before her eyes, stopped for her sun-

bonnet, and they proceeded to the garden; but sadly did Eva rue taking Violet with her; the havoc she made among her pet flowers was frightful; recklessly running about, Violet twisted off great branches, clipping buds and new wood without the slightest remorse: the most precious and common shared a like fate, as she ran over the beds, trampling them down. The little rustic's sweet temper was severely tried, but Eva never forgot, "*Blessed are the meek.*"

"See, aunt, how beautiful!" and Eva held up the vases to Mrs. Munson, the adorning of which had cost her so dearly.

"See what a litter you have made!" responded the aunt, sharply; "the table and floor are covered with leaves and stems."

"Oh, I'll easily remedy that!" and passing her hand quickly over the table, Eva gathered them into her apron, and, taking a broom from a side closet, the leaves and stems were soon sparkling and cracking in the fire.

"Miss Munson!" cried Jemima, rushing in, out of breath, "Mr. Joe's come; I seen him git out ob de cars; he's crossing de *fie!*"

Mrs. Munson was stooping over the fire at the moment, stirring something in a saucepan, and, starting forward, the handle catching in a hole in her apron, (torn by that very nail in the door,) over it went; but she did not see it; she was off to the porch, the spoon in the hand shading her eyes; but instead of rushing to meet her son, standing stalk still,—

"Joe, Joe!" she cried, in her shrillest tone, "why don't you clean your boots on the scraper? what were scrapers made for?"

"For those who like them, mother;" and, running up the steps, Joe gave her a hearty kiss.

"I do wish we could order her to her room, and postpone the meeting until to-morrow," whispered Violet to Eva.

But Eva was at the door to receive her kiss; and as Joe, hardly waiting for an introduction, rushed up to Violet, she thought *her* turn had come; her next thought was, if the face was a true index to the character, Joe's indicated a vast deal of mischief.

"What brings you home, Joe?" asked Mrs. Munson, bluntly; she was afraid he had been expelled, for he was always playing practical jokes upon the professors.

"The measles," replied Joe, laughing; "two young men died of it, and I had permission to go home."

"You had the measles when you were a baby, Joe," said Mrs. Munson, sharply.

"I know it, mother," responded the young hopeful, coolly.

The soup was served, and the next course on table, when, highly perfumed with bad cologne, Joe walked into the dining-room. Busily carving, Mrs. Munson did not look up; but when she did,—

"What have you been after all this time, Joe?" she asked. "Dressing an hour, and forgotten to wash your face! Your chin and lip are covered with coal-dust!"

Joe crimsoned to the very roots of his hair. To display that dark down on his lip and chin was one of his chief inducements for the present visit. He had never passed the looking-glass these two months, without stopping to admire it, and wonder what they would think at home when they found he could *raise a beard*. The mother's notice of it was intended to *kill the caterpillar*. Ruth-

less were her attacks upon the weakness of friend and foe; not that she at all wished to *mangle* people's feelings, but it really seemed to be Mrs. Munson's *vocation*. She slid as naturally into the hateful and offensive, as the fascinating into those nameless captivations which render them irresistible. When she thought people fools, it did her heart good to tell them so.

Dessert was omitted. So anxious was Mrs. Munson to get dinner over, and the room in order for the expected guests, that she scarcely allowed Joe to recover from the attack upon his infant beard before she ordered the table cleared. The girls went up stairs, and Mr. Joe strolled down to the bench on the bank, to smoke the cigar he would not venture upon in the house.

"Violet, Violet, wake! it's time we were dressing," and Eva gave her a gentle shake.

Violet was not asleep, but, feeling lazy, she kept her eyes closed. Slipping softly off of the bed, Eva crept on tip-toe to the wash-stand, and dipping up some water in the hollow of her hand, threw it in Violet's face. Starting to her feet, Violet snatched up the queer three-legged stool and chased her around the room.

"Eva, Eva!" cried Joe, at the door; but the girls, laughing, did not hear him; "I've brought you some flowers to dress your hair;" and a great bony hand was thrust in with a bunch large enough to dress the room. Poor Eva was doomed to be tried that day, through her flowers.

"Girls, girls! here's Miss Phemy; I know her foot-step. Listen! she's coming up stairs!" and as Joe spoke, a figure in a cloak, followed by a little girl, bearing a band-box, glided up the front stairs. "Dear creature, I must get her a bouquet. Violet, doesn't she

look like a cat? I wonder, with her antipathy to the feline tribe, how my mother can be so intimate with Phemy."

Violet laughed.

"Don't encourage him, Violet, he's too bad," said Eva.

"Don't, I beg of you;" and Joe's look of entreaty was so droll, Eva laughed in spite of herself.

"Did you ever hear any one sweeten their wormwood with *dear*, and *poor thing*, as she does? Don't go away; let the door be open; it's not time to dress yet; I want to show you her bouquet;" and he ran down stairs, two steps at a leap, and in a few minutes was back; he had the grace to knock, though *not to wait* for permission to come in, and, opening the door, *sans cérémonie*, "Here it is;" and he held up a bunch of bitter herbs, a thistle stuck in the centre, confined with a faded ribbon begged of Debby.

"Oh, Joe!" remonstrated Eva, "you won't give it to her; it will hurt poor Miss Phemy's feelings."

"I promise to abstain from treading on her corns, or pinching her, and her feelings will be very comfortable; she'll be mad as a hornet, I know; but have you any hot water? the type is not perfect; it needs *wilting*."

"If I had, I would not give you a drop, you disagreeable fellow!" said Eva.

"Nonsense, Eva, you needn't try; you don't know how to be in a passion;" and, laughing, Joe hurried off to Miss Skimpton with the bitter bouquet.

"Who's there?" creaked a thin, wiery voice, with a strong nasal twang.

"Me, Joe, Miss Phemy," was the reply. "I've come to say how do ye do?"

"How do ye do?" squeaked Miss Skimpton, impatiently.

"I have a bouquet for you," cried Joe through the key-hole, in the most cheery, pleasant manner.

"Me! thank you; wait a minute."

And in that minute Miss Skimpton made up her mind to tell everybody *a gentleman* had presented her with the beautiful bouquet; and, in her hurry forgetting her false front and teeth, she opened the door, and holding it ajar, extended a yellow arm and clawy hand for the gift, in her eagerness to secure the prize, never remembering to shake hands; but when she saw the *thistle*, fringed round with wormwood and coarse grass, tossing it in Joe's face, she slammed the door to so suddenly, that, had he not jumped back, his nose would have been *smashed*.

Their toilets made, the girls, descending to the parlor, encountered Joe on the steps; they found Mrs. Munson busily engaged in arranging and lighting the candles and lamps.

"There's Dora!" said Eva, as horses' feet clattering up to the door announced an arrival.

"Hush! not a word;" and as he spoke, slipping behind the door, Joe started out upon her as the little lady passed in.

"Joe!" exclaimed Dora, in a tone of mingled surprise and delight; "what has brought you home, you torment? expelled, are you?"

Then came shaking of hands and explanations; and Dora's voice was in truth so very soft, her smile so sweet, and she looked so pretty in the new pink tissue, that Violet found it difficult to recognize the shooting, fishing girl, followed by a pack of dogs, the Doctor had

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described; though the bright, laughing, spirited, piquant face betrayed, at a glance, the bond of union between the two friends.

"Dora," questioned Mrs. Munson, busy drawing up the wick of an astral lamp, "is your mother coming?"

"I suppose so, neighbor,"—she always called Mrs. Munson neighbor; "Martha and the curling-iron were going up stairs as I came down;" and, mimicking Mrs. Munson to admiration, Dora drew up the wick of the other astral lamp so high that the flame shot up above the shade.

"Fire!" cried Joe.

"Dora, don't you know *glass* breaks?" and, pushing her aside, Mrs. Munson lowered the light.

The guests were arriving; planted near the door, Mrs. Munson received them with a *grim* rigidity of muscle and asperity of tone which the deluded lady really believed to be the extreme of dignity, and which quite overawed and angered the Abbotsforders.

"Let us get in this corner by the window," said Dora; "the curtain between us and the actors, it will be as good as a play; but first tell me, Joe, what can this young lady do?"

"Scratch and pull hair," answered Joe, gravely.

"So can I;" and Dora made a demonstration as if about to tattoo, Violet holding her fan before the threatened cheek.

"Who is that?" asked Violet, as a lean, sallow man bowed solemnly to Mrs. Munson. "He'll never recover his equilibrium."

Instead of answering the question, crossing over to the extraordinary individual, Dora took him by the arm, and walking him up to Violet, introduced Mr. Dobson;

and, slipping behind her chair, entered into conversation with Joe.

Tall and erect as the Lombardy-poplar before the shop-door of Dobson and Pots, the principal of the firm stood a moment in awkward silence, cleared his throat, took his handkerchief from his pocket, unfolded it, looked earnestly at it as if hoping to find therein an idea, and after glancing at the ceiling, coloring deeply, stammered, (Mr. Dobson had an impediment in his speech,)—

“I thought it was going to rain.”

He had thought no such thing; it was a bright, sun-shiny day; not a cloud to be seen.

“Indeed!” and Violet played with her black fan. Another pause, which Mr. Dobson interrupted with,—

“Are you fond of the country, Miss?”

“Not particularly.”

A profound reverence, and Mr. Dobson creaked off and joined the Misses Jones.

“Such people always *creak* in the boot,” whispered Dora.

“Handsome?” exclaimed Mrs. Carr, looking over at Violet; “why, Miss Phemy, she’s not even pretty; I read the girl at a glance; she’s a female Cæsar; the world’s too small for her,” (Mrs. Carr was the *blue* of Abbotsford,) “and *we*, I suppose, quite too plebeian; but I’d like her to know I think myself as good as any ‘*first family*’; I wonder *what* they were before they were first? *I*, for one, won’t be introduced to her; the Jones girls think her superb, rude as she’s been to them; I think it very mean in them to come to-night.

“Did you ever see a piece of plated ware, the silver

rubbed off, and the copper showing, Miss Irving?" asked Dora.

"Apropos to what?" asked Violet.

"To Joe's friend. Fetch and carry they call her in the village, but I call her my old plated candlestick; for, smirk and agonize at the agreeable as she will, the vixen is apparent through all. Did you ever hear her talk about *our* Bishop? the burning and shining light, and a candle set on a hill?"

"Whose plated candlestick are you, Dora?" asked Eva, leaning over the back of her chair.

"Fie, Eva! *you* eaves-dropping!" and Dora administered a pretty smart tap with her fan. "Go away; Miss Irving, Joe, and I want to be wicked a little while. Go and talk Solomon's Proverbs with the Parson. Miss Irving, look beyond creak boots—do you see that ball of a man rolling along this way? That's postmaster Carr Smith. The *on dit* of Abbotsford is, that his literary wife has so great a contempt for needle and thread, poor Carr's clothes are absolutely pinned together. Is it not alarming that a fat man like that should waddle about without a button? Uncle Harry and himself both snuff, and it is said there is a fearful scattering of pins when they indulge in a friendly sneeze.

"Who shall I help first?" asked Joe, as the waiters, with the trays, stopped before them.

"Miss Irving; I'll attend to myself;" and Dora rose and helped herself.

In resuming his seat, Joe flourished his cup dangerously near the new pink tissue.

"If you dare!" said the young lady; and, starting to her feet, she held hers over his head as if about to retaliate by a hot shower-bath.

They had scarcely disembarrassed themselves of their cups and plates when Miss Phemy came up and begged leave to introduce her friend Mrs. Jones. Queen Elizabeth might, but amiable little Victoria never was guilty of so cold and haughty a bow as Miss Irving's.

"Glad to see you, my dear." Mrs. Jones probably admired Violet's style as much as her daughters, and, throwing herself into the chair Joe vacated for her, added, "the girls told me how kind you were about the fashions; isn't this mantua-making a worrying business? I'm always glad when spring and fall is over. Allow me?" and Mrs. Jones took hold of Violet's sleeve. "It's very graceful and easy to make. Would you lend me the pattern, my dear?"

"Madame Franeau is my mantuamaker," replied Violet, assuming an attitude that effectually protected her sleeve from further investigation.

"Oh, if you havn't got the pattern, I can cut it; I'll promise not to *mess* the dress!"

Violet bent her head in assent, without speaking; and, her object attained,—

"Excuse me, my dear; Mrs. Higgins is beckoning to me; that's her on the sofa; come here Vic.;" and the step-mother patted the fat, red neck. "Take my seat; I know you and Miss Irving will cotton to one another in a minute."

"When is a neck not a neck, Miss Irving?" asked Vic., by way of beginning the cottoning process.

"I really don't know," replied Violet, coldly.

"When it's a *little* bare! he, he, he!" and Vic.'s mirth exploded in an uproarious laugh.

But finding Violet not at all smart, as she afterwards informed her sisters, edging her chair close, discarding

conundrums, Miss Vic., prefacing her communications with the request that Violet would not *tell* anybody, informed her, in strict confidence, that their carriage was to be painted as soon as ma and pa could settle upon a pretty coat of arms; that pa was going to run for the legislature, and Cleo. was soon to be married to the apothecary next door to them; it was to be a *grand wedding*, and she dare say, when they got intimate, Cleo. would ask her for bridesmaid.

The young minister, meanwhile, hedged in by vestrymen and wardens, was rendering himself extremely obnoxious to both parties by siding with neither *high* or *low*. Eubank not a party man, determined to extinguish, if possible, party spirit among his people.

"This is being very selfish, gentlemen," said Mrs. Carr, breaking through the formidable phalanx of boots and cravats. "You gentlemen should not monopolize Mr. Eubank; we want him to decide a question of theology;" and, taking the rector's arm, she carried him off. "Sit here;" and, putting aside her dress, Mrs. Carr motioned Eubank to the small corner of the sofa unoccupied by her extensive hoops. "Do you think, Mr. Eubank," and she glanced round at the circle, "because one joins the church, they must necessarily give up innocent amusements?"

Eubank smiled as he requested she would define innocent amusements.

"Why the theatre and balls, and the like; our Saviour himself went to a party, you know."

"Yes, to perform a miracle, and thus convert those who were present. 'It was *his meat and drink* to do *his Father's will*.' If *we* go to such places with the same object in view and a like spirit, and also the same

power to withstand temptation, we may safely venture anywhere. The Apostle's definition of true religion, and undefiled before God, is, 'To visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep one's self *unspotted* from the world;' and those who faithfully discharge these duties find little time, little money, and still less inclination, for the amusements you contend for. Frivolous, indeed, must that person be who would willingly pass from a death-bed to a ball-room, and *hard* the heart that could turn from the starving to lavish money upon laces and ribbons."

"Well, Mr. Eubank, I said, from what I heard of your sermon, this was just the way you would talk;" and again Mrs. Carr glanced significantly at Mrs. Jones.

"Well," remarked that lady, with a self-willed, I-know-better smile, "people may say what they like, but young people will be young people; I let our girls dress and enjoy themselves as much as they please; when they get to be old or in trouble, no doubt they'll be religious enough."

"Are you *sure* they will live to be old?" asked Eubank.

Here the conversation was interrupted by Mrs. Munson, who, informing the young minister her object in assembling the congregation was to make him acquainted with his people, requested he would allow her to do so; and, walking with him through the rooms, she introduced him generally. The uncut ice-cake, the signal for leave-taking, soon followed; then came the drollest courtesying and bowing, and a rush for cloaks and hats.

"*De'il* take the hindmost!" said Dora; "so Joe, please look up my things;" and, tying on her bonnet, slipping on her riding skirt, she put on her cloak, drew on her

gloves, and the whip in one hand, holding up the front of her dress with the other; the back trailing after her, nodding good-by, she ran out of the room and down the steps, jumped to the saddle and cantered after mamma and papa, who, shut up in their luxuriously-wadded carriage, chatted away as contentedly as if the heir apparent clattering behind had been a boy.

* * * * *

While these scenes were enacting in Elmwood, the current of life flowed on smoothly in Philadelphia. Vane wrote briefs, filed deeds, thought of Violet, began many letters to her and finished none. Mr. Seaton tied his purse-strings in a hard knot. Scold, and pet, and coax as she might, the wife could not get a cent. Mrs. Seaton and Belle, nevertheless, were very busy preparing for their summer's tour, consulting with the mantua-maker, and selecting trimmings. Dr. Theodore visiting his patients when he had any, and when he had none, lounging in Walnut Street. Mrs. Ives made her daily rounds among the poor, Meta sometimes with her, but more frequently walking with Ernest. Strange that a man so acute in other matters as Mr. Gray, should be so obtuse in *this*! The truth was, Gray, though occasionally giving charming little suppers, thought of little but the fluctuation of stock.

Dreadful as was the shock of Mrs. Irving's death, it had passed from the minds of her friends. The noble ship founders in the storm, the foaming billows close over her, and she is seen no more; the sky clears, bright and clear and calm the sea sparkles in the sunshine; thus the waves of time close over us, and the dead are forgotten. A plank of the shattered bark may, perchance, rise to the surface, some event recall for a brief moment the

thought of the departed; but the plank, borne onward by the current, is soon lost to sight; the incident passes, and the memory of the dead is gone!

Mr. Gray was to have a supper to-night; but never did Meta feel so unlike entertaining company! Remarkable for her even flow of spirits, she rose that morning with a weight at her heart for which she could not account. In vain she strove to shake it off, repeating to herself the promise, "As thy *day* so shall thy strength be." It seemed to her she was overshadowed by the wing of death—a feeling altogether new; darkness lay heavy on her soul, increased by the consciousness that, if she had faith, even as a grain of mustard-seed, she could say to the mountain, "*Be thou cast into the sea, and it would be.*" How incomprehensible, how wonderful are these foreshadowings of impending doom! these vague, undefinable apprehensions of we know not what, which steal upon the heart like the low murmur in the air preceding the coming *avalanche*! Neither fear nor awe, but a strange mingling of the two—a trembling expectancy—the footfall of approaching woe echoing through the heart in the darkness of uncertainty! Never was hostess more thankful to have guests depart than was poor Meta; and, complaining of not feeling well, she kissed her father for good-night, and was already at the door, when she turned for another look at him, as he sat smoking at the open window. In unusual spirits to-night, Mr. Gray was the life of the party; his humorous stories even called up smiles to the sad face of his daughter. Overcome with a sudden gush of tenderness, Meta returned, and, silently breathing the prayer for his eternal welfare which she knew would anger him if uttered, pressed her lips to her father's forehead,

and as she did so a low moan in the corner near them made her start. She knew it was only a harp-string that had snapped, but she held her breath until it died away. Passing his arm around her, Mr. Gray drew her fondly to his breast. Meta lay there a moment very still, and, twining her arms around him,—

“Dear, dear father,” she whispered, “another kiss;” and, springing to her feet, Meta ran out of the room.

Her father was in perfect health. Why did she feel to-night as if she could not part from him? Even after she had gone up stairs, but for the fear that he would think her silly and laugh at her, she would have come down again for another kiss, another fond embrace.

“Some foolish qualm of conscience!” thought Mr. Gray, when he saw her eyes full of tears. “I hope she’s not going to be sick; her mother was very nervous before she was taken ill.”

It was a long while since he had thought of the mother; but she was now before him as in life, the loving, delicate, fragile, clinging creature. How had he lived so long contentedly without his pretty Laura? The moonlight was streaming in at the window. Mr. Gray got up and turned off the gas, all but one burner, and lowering that, threw away the burnt end of his cigar and lit another. With the thought of the confiding young wife came incidents of their married life, their courtship, other courtships, his boyhood, childhood, his father, his mother, brothers, and bright young sisters—all in the grave—mingling and shifting like the fantastic changes of a dream, as the odorous smoke of the exquisite Havana curled around him. Long he sat indulging these pleasant musings. A cloud came over the moon; he raised his eyes to the darkened sky thick strewn with stars; myriads of

worlds, the work of who? Chance? Had accident created and retained them in their orbits? Humbug; the law of nature kept them there. Who made the law of nature? What was nature? What, if after all, Meta should be right and there be a *God*?—a day of *doom* and *eternity*? A cold shudder crept through his frame; and Mr. Gray threw away his cigar, rang for the servant to shut up the house, and went to bed calling himself a d—d fool.

Restless and nervous, Meta slept little, and rose early, more weary and sad than when she went to bed. When she entered the breakfast-room, her father was not on the sofa by the window, reading the newspaper. For the first time her presentiment assumed a tangible form; *she would never see him there again!* In an agony of alarm, she rushed to his chamber; "Father, dear father!" she cried, as she ran through the entry. There was no answer; the chamber door was open; Meta rushed in; extended on the bed, his eyes blood-shot, staring wildly, his face purple, the veins in his forehead standing out like cords, he was breathing that dreadful snore which proves the brain the seat of disease. His coat lay on the floor; he had been struck down while undressing. Meta's cries drew the servants to the room. Love lends wings; Paul had lived with them for years, and ere Meta thought it possible he could have got to Dr. Morgan's, he was back to say the Doctor would be there immediately.

"Dying! Good God! Gray dying! Faster, faster!" Dr. Morgan kept calling to the coachman, although they were tearing along like mad through the streets, and everybody staring at the reckless speed at which he was driving.

"*So well, and in such spirits last night! Gray was the last man I should have expected to die of apoplexy.*"

As a fast liver, also, the Doctor trembled for himself. A messenger had been dispatched for Mrs. Ives, and she was there almost as soon as Dr. Morgan. The Doctor gave no hope; the case was plain, there was no need of consultation; a vein was opened, and the blood flowed drop by drop; he was put in a hot bath, and speech returned, but not consciousness. Incoherently he raved; the name of God often on his lips, but, alas! only as an imprecation. Poor Meta! what years of misery were condensed into those long, anxious hours, spent by the bedside listening, hoping, and praying for a word, a look, *something, anything* to shape into a hope when he was gone; *one* gleam of reason, if but to say, "*God be merciful to me a sinner!*"

She trembled as she listened to the ticking of the clock on the mantle stealing away the precious moments, fearing each would be his last. Yet, oh! how *long* the hours seemed, as she sat watching for some favorable change; for a word, a look, some sign of recognition and repentance! A strange seriousness all at once came over his face; he gazed up anxiously at her; Meta stooped low over him; great drops burst out on his forehead; his nose became sharp and pinched; one low, deep sigh,—Thou who "tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb," have mercy upon poor Meta! Her father is dead!

"Father, oh, my father!" The poor girl's very life seemed passing from her in that cry of agony; and, casting herself down on the bed beside the corpse, she frantically kissed the ashy lips.

Mrs. Ives offered no consolation; what could she say? She knew the thought that well-nigh maddened Meta. "Parted! parted through all eternity! Lost to me in both worlds, my dear, dear father!" Oh! what an inheritance for a parent to bequeath his child! Truly, it requires *all* the balm in Gilead to heal a wound like *this*.

"Verily, the Lord careth for his own," was Mrs. Ives's thought, as she closed Mr. Gray's eyes. "Plotting to entice his child, his only, his darling, loving child, into the follies, the thoughtlessness, the sins of a world she cared not for. Poor Annie! Unhappy Mr. Gray! Where are they now?"

"Pray for me," dear aunty, sobbed Meta, as she sat leaning her head against Mrs. Ives's shoulder, in the darkened chamber of the old ivy house, hereafter to be her home.

The supporting arm was tightened around the trembling form; closer, closer Mrs. Ives gathered her darling to her breast, as she whispered, "God doth not willingly afflict."

"I know it; and I *do try* to feel—'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him,'" sobbed Meta, in broken sentences.

CHAPTER VII.

STRONG-MINDED as she was, the mistress of Elmwood confessed *one* weakness, videlicet, an unconquerable antipathy to *cats*; which weakness, however, she maintained, was more her mother's than her own, being an inheritance. Unfortunately, it had descended to Joe, and as if in revenge for his unreasonable horror of them, the wretches literally haunted the house whenever he was at home. Scarcely a day passed, since his return, that a miserable little kitten did not get under his mother's dress and set her almost frantic, practicing gymnastics; regularly as they sat down to table, some ferocious cat was sure to bounce into the room, and, running directly to Mrs. Munson, begin to scratch and tear like mad at the carpet around her chair. Where the creatures came from no one could tell. Every night before going to bed, armed with a broomstick and preceded by Debby, bearing a light, Mrs. Munson had a regular cat-hunt; peeping under beds, wardrobes, and bureaux—in fact, into every hole and corner through the house, ready to run and shriek if she spied a cat. Yet no sooner was she snugly tucked in, and the candle out, than, congregating on the landing-place near her door, there was so terrific a mewling and spluttering and clawing, one would have supposed, of the true Killenny breed, the horrid creatures were actually devouring one another alive. The valerian scattered to attract *them* was soon eaten, and, slipping out of the window

left open for their accommodation, the secret remained with the cats, Dora, and Joe.

The afternoon after the party, Mrs. Munson and the girls in the parlor,—dear Eva suggesting excuses, the other two discussing the forwardness and vulgarity of the Misses Jones, when, going to the window to thread her needle,—“How dark it is all at once!” said Mrs. Munson; and as she spoke, a vivid flash of lightning caused the *strong-minded* to start back and drop the needle; “I’m not *afraid* of lightning,” she said, as she laid by her work, “but it’s a wicked daring of one’s fate to sew in a thunder-storm.”

“Only see how leisurely Dora and Joe are sauntering across the fields, and that black cloud overhead!” observed Eva, who also had come to the window.

“Tramping down my wheat as if it was grass;” was Mrs. Munson’s angry response.

“How do ye do?” squeaked Miss Phemy, rushing in, out of breath; “I stopped to remind you that the sewing circle meets to-morrow, and to get my scissors, which I left here yesterday, Eva.”

“Here they are;” and Eva took them from her work-basket and handed them to her.

“Thank you! I must tell you a smart thing Mrs. Carr said about them. I was dining there, and trying to cut something, (they are rather dull;) grave as a judge, ‘Phemy,’ says she, ‘is that one of the *chew* family?’ But bless me! it’s going to rain; I must be off.”

“Nonsense, Phemy; it will pour before you get out of the avenue.”

“No, I walk very fast; good-bye!” and without stopping to shake hands, she turned to go; but stopped again at the parlor door for a few *last* words, I presume,

and before they were said, down came the rain—a drenching summer-shower.

Joe and Dora, as little weather-wise,—or, what is quite as probable, too much occupied to observe the cloud,—set off at full speed for the house. Dora got to the steps first, ran up, tossed her wet bonnet on the floor, and giving herself pretty much such a shake as the Scotch terrier would under similar circumstances, came laughing into the parlor.

“Girls, did you see the race?” she asked, out of breath.

“I saw you and Joe trampling down the wheat,” was Mrs. Munson’s sharp response.

“There, Joe! you naughty fellow; didn’t I tell you so?” and Dora mimicked Mrs. Munson’s angry tone and frown; “I knew your mother would scold you; as for me,

‘E’en the slight harebell raises its head
Elastic from my airy tread;”

and, holding up her skirts as she spoke, Dora displayed a very substantial “*understanding*,” protected by a pair of rational thick-soled leather boots. Like Joe, she was proof against Mrs. Munson’s *wrath*.

“Oh! let her scold; she loves it; it’s good for her lungs,” Dora often said to the girls; “don’t mind it; do as I do; think of something else.”

The rain continued, and, as night came on, the wind rose; sweeping down from the hills, it tossed the branches of the trees aloft to the dark, starless sky, twisting and snapping off great branches as if they had been twigs. The lightning—a sheet of flame darted forth in a blinding flash from the blackness of darkness—for the moment, the sky seemed all on fire; and the thunder, in a

stunning crash, shook the house; and ere one loud peal died away among the hills, it was followed by another yet more terrific—the rain beating like hail against the windows.

“I tremble for my orchard,” observed Mrs. Munson.

“And I, for my poor flowers,” said Eva.

“And I, for the *wheat*,” added the saucy Dora, looking grave and troubled as either.

“In thunder, lightning, and in rain,
When shall we all meet again?”

said Joe, addressing himself to the little circle around the centre-table. “Miss Phemy, it is just the night for ghost-stories; come, let us have the one you give with such effect: the unfortunate groom, you know, who died the wedding-night, and, cruel wretch, haunted the poor bride to death.”

As usual, Miss Phemy averred she was no hand at telling a story, (though all present, but Violet, knew she prided herself particularly upon this talent,) and, with equal sincerity, denied her belief in ghosts,—it was silly and vulgar,—though upon such occasions she always spoke low, started at every noise, and was constantly glancing toward the dark corners of the room. When at last prevailed upon to commence the recital, crediting it or not, Miss Skimpton gave the tale as if she believed every word of it, and had been present on the occasion, and consequently produced the most flattering alarm in her hearers. Debby listened at the parlor door until she was sure something touched her, and, with a little shriek, afraid to look behind, ran back to the kitchen and retailed the hobgoblins with such thrilling effect that, when the terrier (stretched out before the

fire) barked in its sleep, Rose and Clemence, who had not exchanged a word for a week, rushed screaming into each other's arms. Clemence despised the Irish, and Rose and Debby ridiculed her gibberish, and pronounced the Frenchwoman a consequential old fool.

In the parlor, horror followed horror; and Joe, in order to increase the interest, gave his bogles a location and a name, dates, and other life-like touches; and, at last, they all became so nervous, that Mrs. Munson insisted upon their changing the subject; when, as is common upon such occasions, everybody got sleepy and afraid to go to bed.

Prayers over, Mrs. Munson, Miss Skimpton, and Joe retired. The girls soon followed, and were bidding good-night at Violet's door, when Debby rushed up to them in pretended alarm, declaring she had seen a ghost on the stairs. There, sure enough, it was,—an immensely tall-sheeted figure, its eyes fixed in a vacant stare, and the hands meekly folded on its breast.

"What's all this noise about?" asked Mrs. Munson, putting her uncapped head out of her chamber door.

"What's the matter?" echoed Miss Skimpton, coming to hers.

Down jumped the ghost from the bench which served to eke out its unnatural height, and darting along the entry, whipping the spinster under its arm, carried her off.

"Put me down! let me go!" shrieked Miss Phemy.

But the ghost was as deaf as its winding sheet.

"Stewed prunes," whispered Dora, to the girls, screwing up her mouth in imitation of the spinster's; "don't she look as if she never said anything but stewed prunes all her life? Oh! mercy!" (and *now* Dora spoke loud

enough to be heard by every one,) "it's going to carry Miss Phemy to the churchyard!"

Joe was desperate in a practical joke; Miss Phemy knew it; and, alarmed at this announcement, wriggling and squirming about in attempting to extricate herself, she executed most shocking faces.

"Why don't the old goosey-gander bite him?" whispered Dora, convulsed with laughter; "oh! the false teeth are out; but look, she'll demolish poor Joe!" Twining her clawy hands in the ghost's hair, the enraged spinster jerked out a handful. The ghost uttered a deep, sepulchral groan, but held its victim fast.

"Joe, are you crazy?" screamed Mrs. Munson; "put down Phemy this instant." The whole scene had been acted out in less time than it has taken to relate it.

The ghost, with the struggling spinster in its arms, was now at her door, and, setting her on her feet, Joe opened it for her with the most ostentatious show of politeness. Bouncing in, Miss Phemy slammed it in his face—a second time Joe's nose had come near being smashed that evening. Determining to postpone the scold she intended for him, until the next morning, Mrs. Munson returned to bed; and, laughing hysterically, Joe sat down on the stairs, and throwing off the winding-sheet and dough mask, said,—

"Girls, I do wish I had kissed her; I thought of it, but she is too bitter ugly; I gave her a pinch instead."

"Beware the ides of March, young man!" and Eva held up her finger at Joe.

The *ides* won't find me, Eva; I'm engaged to breakfast with Dora. Good-night to you, ladies;" and, jumping up, he ran off, with the sheet trailing after him.

The girls remained some time in Violet's room, laugh-

ing over Miss Phemy and her horrible grimaces; and when they were gone, Violet sat down to finish the "Lord of Creation;" deeply interested in the fate of poor Carry and the sensible, terse Miss Kendal, once or twice she fancied she heard steps in the entry, and listened, but they ceased; then she was *sure* there were persons whispering near the door; she got up and locked it. "Robare! robare! murder! Oh! mon Dieu! robare!" It was Clemence's voice, and, forgetting her own fears in anxiety for Clemence, Violet ran to her assistance; but, on reaching the room, instead of finding an assassin at the old woman's throat, there stood Clemence and Debby (who had been bribed to sleep with her that night) just within the door, shrieking at the top of their voices at a man stretched off on a couple of chairs by the bed, his hat drawn down over his face, apparently sound asleep.

"Don't be frightened, Clemence; it's only Joe!" Violet said, not a little provoked that he should torment poor Clemence as he did; and, turning to Debby, asked "if she was not ashamed to make such a noise and disturb the family, when she knew it was Joe?"

While she was speaking, roused by the cries, the different members of the family, one after another, came running to the room, all with a secret hope it would prove a trick of Joe's. Miss Phemy was so sure of it, that she said, loud enough for him to hear,—

"That he was a fool, and deserved to have his ears boxed."

His mother, evidently of the same opinion, was about to award him his deserts, and approached the sleeper with a most threatening countenance, when who should walk in, putting on his coat, but Mr. Joe! His entrance was hailed by a chorus of shrieks.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe, glancing round at the array of night-gowns and caps; and looking extremely provoked as his eye rested on the sleeper,—“The devil! is the fellow drunk?” and with that, doubling his great bony fist, he dealt the sleeper a blow that sent him sprawling on the floor, and, the hat and mask falling off, betrayed Richard Roe *alias* Robert Doe, *alias* a veritable *man of straw*! created expressly for the purpose of disturbing and frightening the household; not awaiting *results*, and laughing heartily, Mr. Joe by hasty strides made good his retreat, and, off to breakfast with Dora before his mother was up, dodged the scold.

Had an Abbotsford ghost presumed upon the liberties which he of Elmwood took with the spinster, she would have resented it for life; but when it became a question between dignity and visiting at Elmwood, Miss Skimpton decided it was a *boyish* affair, not worth noticing; and when shaking hands with his mother, on going home, assured her Joe had always been one of her greatest favorites, and would continue such; she knew he did not mean anything by his little jests.

It was very good-humored of Miss Phemy; for, besides the ghost affair, she and her friend had had quite an altercation about the new minister, whom Mrs. Munson liked very much, and Miss Skimpton not at all.

“He had,” Miss Skimpton asserted, “been very supercilious in a conversation with Mrs. Carr, and talked and preached *low church*,” and she repeated her apprehensions of prayer meetings.

“Singular that the bishop—or *your* bishop, as you call him, Phemy—should have made such an injudicious selection?” retorted Mrs. Munson.

Miss Skimpton grew deathly pale, (she was one who

always turned white in her wrath,) and, looking very ghastly, bit her lip, but said no more on the subject.

With Miss Phemy, the bishop possessed the royal prerogative of being always in the right; it was enough to say to her such was *the* bishop, or any *bishop's* opinion, and it instantly became a *law* with Miss Skimpton. Her prayers were always from the prayer-book; how she managed, with her horror of extempore prayer, when in the dark or too ill to read, she never confessed, unless, perhaps, to the bishop. Some conjectured the prayers were omitted altogether; the more charitable, that she transgressed, for poor Miss Phemy had no memory; and often said, it frightened her to death for a child to ask her to repeat the Lord's prayer, or put a question to her in the multiplication table, she was so afraid of making a mistake. She would rather *never* have heard a sermon, than listen to one from a minister without his robes; and to enter any but an Episcopal church was, in Miss Phemy's opinion, an unpardonable sin, and a wickedness, she declared, nothing on earth could tempt her to commit. Intimate with the bishop, and knowing him to be liberal, and pious, and learned, Miss Temple tried in vain to make Miss Skimpton understand she was doing him great injustice in citing him as she often did; but Miss Phemy insisted that the bishop, the House of Bishops, in fact, all the *apostolic succession*, thought precisely *as she did*; and, as Miss Mary knew nobody cared what Miss Phemy thought, she charitably allowed her to enjoy her opinion.

By a course of reasoning and induction peculiar to young people, Joe and Eva proved, most satisfactorily to Violet, that, although it was contrary to the laws of etiquette, under existing circumstances, to visit in town,

yet crape and bombazine were no barriers to dinners and teas in the country. Their neighbors were just like their own family, and so Violet accepted invitations and passed her time much more pleasantly than she could possibly have done shut up at home in the city. The girls frequently walked over to Linden Hill, and there was a pretty short cut through the woods yet unexplored, which Eva wished to show her cousin; accordingly, as soon as the ground was dry enough, after the storm, they set forth. Eva, with a small basket over her arm, making a great mystery of its contents, and shaking her head to all Violet's guesses, tripped along with the free step of a country lassie; but poor Violet, embarrassed by her long skirts and French boots, picked her way cautiously among stones and ruts, looking (which was indeed the case) as if a walk afforded her little gratification.

"What a nice cool breeze, Violet!" remarked Eva; "see those beautiful fleecy clouds, sailing along the blue sky; and hark to those sweet notes! How lovely the country is this morning; the smell of the earth and green leaves is perfectly delicious!"

"I prefer the dust and pavements of dear Philadelphia," sighed Violet; "how I long to have you with me there, Eva!"

Eva sighed too, as she replied, "My habits and tastes are all rustic, dear; I love the country;" and, occupied each with their own thoughts, they walked on again in silence.

How characteristic! thankful for common blessings, Eva every now and then stopped to gather the sweet wild-flowers springing in her path; while Violet crushed them under foot. Her thoughts were of Philadelphia,

of Willie, of his smile—that beautiful smile, perhaps, beaming fondly on another—and the voice which always set her heart fluttering,—might it not even now be whispering honeyed flatteries to some other girl? Why should she care? She would *not* accept him after his heartless conduct, was he ever so devoted. Yes, she *did* care for him! She could not disguise from herself the humiliating fact—she *loved Willie*, though she *despised* herself for it.

But their feet were no longer imbedded in soft turf and dry leaves, green boughs waving overhead; they had passed from dream-land, and, out of the woods, were on the broad road between two high red sandhills, the mica in the coarse gravel gleaming here and there like diamonds in the sun.

“Violet,” said Eva, stooping down and gathering some, “am I not a miracle of generosity, poor as I am, darling, to present you with a handful of diamonds?”

Eva spoke playfully; but Violet said, gravely,—

“Thank you!” and slipped them in her pocket.

“Why, Violet! what are you thinking of?” asked Eva, amused at her pre-occupation.

“I shall keep them, Eva,” replied Violet, sorrowfully, “and look at them when I am far away; and perhaps,” (and her voice faltered,) “perhaps the day may come when I shall cry over them.”

She was thinking of Willie’s treachery, and for the first time it occurred to Violet that Eva, too, might cease to love her. Of late, she had become subject to spells of despondency; and concluding she was in one of her low-spirited moods, Eva answered, playfully,—

“Oh! they are not sentimental enough to cry over; throw them away, and take these flowers for your tears.”

"Thank you! I will take both; these will not be the first flowers I have treasured up, Eva!

'Touched by the hand of those we love,
A scrap of paper, a pin, a glove,
A pebble, become most dear.'

These will remind me of this walk, of many pleasant walks I have taken with you, darling, and the lessons so sweetly, so delicately given;" and before Eva could reply, Violet ran to the well, shaded by a noble horse-chestnut, and humming—

"The old oaken bucket,
The iron-bound bucket,"—

let down that swing to the end of a long pole, drew it up, took a sip, paused a moment to look at the hen and chickens hopping about in the grass and running in and out of the coop,—beautiful white bantams, Miss Mary's pets,—and passing through a small wicket, Eva and Violet were on the lawn before the house. Here were no oddly-shaped beds and formal walks, as at Elmwood. Miss Mary cared not for rare flowers: she loved those that used to grow in her mother's garden when she was a child, and every variety of rose—verbena, heart's-ease, carnations, deep red and variegated hyacinths, violets, jouquils, and geraniums—bloomed around the linden-trees scattered over the lawn, or shot up in circles in little spaces in the closely shaven grass, as if Nature, not dear Miss Mary, had bid them live there. A rosy-cheeked child was busy weeding, singing to herself as she worked away. The sweet infant voice, the drowsy murmur of the bees settling upon the flowers, the low, continuous rustling of the leaves, the mingling of melody

and perfume, the sweet, animated quietude, and exquisite neatness of all around, was charming.

"I think, Eva, had I never heard anything of Miss Mary, I should have guessed her out by her surroundings," remarked Violet, "as the Wallingford's by theirs. At the Briery, the lawn is always littered with dead leaves and branches, the window-shutters flapping about with that desolate look which says, 'there lives no mistress here.' I pity a man whose home lacks the air of domesticity,—what the Germans mean when they speak of a living room; such houses, whatever else they may boast, always depress me."

Miss Temple was busy making a frock for the little weeder; Keble's Christian Year lay before her on the work-table; she received the girls most cordially. Violet and Miss Mary had many friends in common, and while discussing them, and Violet giving Belle's latest news from Philadelphia, Eva took up the book from the table, and, attracted by a pencil-marked paragraph, read,—

"Well is it for us, our God should feel
Alone our secret throbbings; so our prayers
May readier spring to Heaven, nor spend their zeal
On cloud-born idols of this lower world;
For, if *one* heart in perfect sympathy
Beat with another's, giving love for love,
Weak mortals, all enchanted on earth would lie,
Nor listen for the purer strains on high."

Another place was marked by a violet between the leaves, and as such selections are a sort of index to the reader's mind, we will give Miss Mary's. It was headed, "If any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ."

"That *dearest* of thy bosom friends,
Into the wavering heart descends;
What! fallen again? yet cheerful rise;
Thine *Intercessor never dies*."

"Blessed assurance, Eva, is it not?" asked Miss Mary, glancing over the lines, as Eva laid the book on the table.

Eva smiled her assent; they seldom disagreed upon any subject, more especially upon this. General conversation followed. The girls fully appreciated Miss Mary's company, and always stayed with her as long as possible. Eva was the first to rise; Miss Mary playfully upbraided her for it; Violet rebelled, declaring she would not go.

"The truth is, cousin mine, for once I've plotted against you," said Eva, smiling.

Miss Mary glanced at the basket and guessed in what way; Violet had her suspicions also.

"I will tell you all about it before we get home; that is, provided you say good-bye at once."

Generous in the extreme, and ever ready to aid with her purse, Violet's notions of the poor, gathered from Dickens' novels, were so revolting, and her horror of coming in contact with them so great, she never could be induced to accompany her cousin in her visits of charity. Their way, in returning home, lay through the fields.

"What a pretty cottage!" remarked Violet, pointing to a neatly white-washed one, embowered in trees, the thin blue smoke slowly curling up above the tree-tops, melting away in the air.

"It is Betty Green's, the cripple who you have given

me money for more than once. Suppose we stop and ask how she is?"

"You designing, artful creature! that's your plot, is it? and it is to bring her something in that basket, you have beguiled me into this circuitous path? Ain't you ashamed of yourself? The outside of poverty is not so revolting as I imagined it; I believe I will take a peep at the interior;" and accordingly they bent their steps to Betty's.

At the spring they met Jemmie, the little boy of whom Mr. Dunbar had spoken in such high terms. He was stooping down, filling his bucket from a mossy spring. But as soon as he saw Eva, looking very happy, he ran to meet them.

"Ma will be so glad to see you Miss," he said; and glancing up at the stranger, blushed, and hung his head sheepishly.

"How is your mother, Jemmie?" asked Eva, kindly.

"Ma's bin very bad, Miss, and I've bin sick, too."

"I thought so, Jemmie, by these sticks, and chips, and leaves lying about; you always keep things very nice when you are well; how forward your cabbages and beans are!"

Running on before them, Jemmie opened the cottage door, with—"Here's Miss Eva, Ma!"

Warm as the weather was, they found poor Betty crouching over a few embers smouldering on the hearth. Jemmie was indeed a good boy to his crippled mother: the floor was well scrubbed; the deal table white as snow; the plates and cups and saucers ranged in rows on the shelves in the buffet, in the nicest order; the glass doors shinningly clean.

"Don't rise, Betty;" and Eva laid her hand on the

poor woman's shoulder. "I am sorry to hear you have been sick."

"Suffering worse nor ever, Miss," answered Betty, holding up her warped, twisted fingers; "but God knows better than we."

"Well, Betty, at all events it is a blessed thing to be so resigned," said Eva.

"*Resigned*, Miss Eva? that's not the word for me, who has so *much* to be thankful for;" and Betty glanced around her miserable smoky shanty as if it had been a palace. "I bless God I'm so well off."

Violet thought of *her* luxurious home, and wondered it had never occurred to her to thank God for it.

Oh, Miss, I didn't ever think to see you agin," continued Betty; "I really believed I was going, I was so bad t'other night; but my time wasn't come;" and Betty sighed.

"Wasn't you afraid?" asked Violet, surprised to hear her speak so cheerfully of dying.

"Afeared to go to heaven, Miss?" asked Betty; "oh, no! it's that blessed hope that makes me able to bear my pain. Sweet hope! the king on his throne can't buy it; but the child of God, if he be's a beggar like poor Lazarus, has it 'without money and without price;'" and the sufferer's face brightened as she spoke. Violet thought of her grandmother, and sighed deeply.

Salutary are these visits to the poor man's home, where *facts* preach sermons, disregarded from the pulpit. Eva and Jemmie were very busy transferring the contents of the basket to the little cupboard, and, by way of saying something, Violet asked Betty if she was not very lonely when Jemmie was away at work.

"No, Miss," she replied, cheerfully; "here's my com-

panion;" and Betty laid her poor warped hand upon the Bible in her lap.

Betty delighted very much in hearing Eva sing hymns, particularly that commencing, "Be Still my Heart." So little conversant was Violet with the Prayer-book, she did not know it contained such a hymn, or Betty's other favorite, either, "Sovereign Ruler of the Skies." When she came alone, Eva always read the Bible to Betty; but, fearing to tire her cousin, she only sang now, the cripple looking very happy, joining in occasionally.

"Good-bye, Betty!" she said, shaking hands kindly at parting. But Violet could not bring herself to touch the poor deformed hand.

"Good-bye!" she said, nodding to Betty, and, as she passed out of the door, laying a gold piece on the table. Very thankful was Betty for the alms; but Eva's warm sympathy and friendly pressure of that poor hand was more to the sufferer than aught that gold could purchase.

"How do you like Betty?" asked Eva, as they walked home.

"I should be almost tempted to envy her, if she really has no fear of death," answered Violet, thoughtfully.

"Mr. Eubank was with her the night she alluded to," replied Eva, "and every one thought she was dying; she thought so herself; and he told me he never saw such self-abnegation and entire trust in the Saviour."

"But, Eva, the presumptuous creature speaks as confidently of going to heaven as if she was a blessed martyr!"

"Suppose, Violet, you had incurred a debt you never could pay, and a rich friend were to pay it for you; would it be presumptuous in you to believe that it was

paid? What would you think of one who, under such circumstances, instead of being penetrated with gratitude, was always doubting the fact? The sting of death is sin, and Christ having paid the penalty of sin, it is the Christian's privilege to 'fear the grave as little as his bed.' "

"Yet, dear, we see many good people shrink from death."

"True, Violet; every one speaks to children of death as the greatest of evils, and soon they come to look upon it as such; and in some constitutions the apprehension is so strong that even the love which casteth out fear cannot altogether banish it."

"But, dear Eva, how can we tell when we have this love?"

"In other words," replied Eva, "when we are converted. An excellent writer thus defines the change. 'Before conversion, the heart is sordid, selfish; afterwards, it begins to be enlarged with a benevolence which soon embraces the *whole world* in its comprehensive charity. *Good-will* to man is the distinguishing characteristic of the renewed *creature*.' "

"After all, Eva," persisted Violet, "I can't help thinking it *presumption* for a *sinful* creature to assume so positively they will go to heaven."

"Violet, do you doubt that Moses, and King David, and Peter, the denier of his Lord, are in heaven?"

"I don't know, Eva; let us talk of something else; I'll leave such discussions to you and the Rector;" and as she spoke, (strange how frequently these things happen!) who should ride up to them but the very gentleman in question, and, dismounting, passing his arm through the bridle, Eubank walked along with them; he frequently

joined them in their rambles, and hospitable Mrs. Munson always insisted upon his remaining to whatever meal was pending. The young Rector had become quite domesticated in the family; but he did not prove the charming beau Violet imagined him from his sermon. An intelligent, refined, gentlemanly person, he certainly was; but nothing of the beau: his manner was much more that of a calm, quiet, elder brother, anxious for their improvement, which delighted Eva, and made her feel more at ease with Eubank than with any other young man she had ever met. He was on his way to Elmwood when they met him, the bearer of an invitation from Miss Mary for the next evening.

The bachelor had been for some time past engaged in writing a poem, which he had promised to read to the girls; it was finished, and he kindly determined to make it a recreation for the neighborhood. The reading was to come off the next evening. Of course, everybody came. The young minister, Mrs. Munson's family, Miss Skimp-ton, Dora, Joe, and Mr. Wallingford; (it was too damp for Mrs. Wallingford to venture out; the lady was not fond of poetry.) Somehow or other, though determined to behave well, the young people got into a very foolish humor at the tea-table,—an unfortunate state of mind for the critics of a poem; even Eubank was so carried away by the contagion of laughing faces, he became quite afflicted with a cough; fortunately, however, they calmed down by the time tea was through. The ladies took out their work, the gentlemen closed in the circle; and, having arranged the lights to his satisfaction, uncle Charley, helping himself to a pinch of snuff, began. His voice was pleasant; his enunciation distinct; the poem lost nothing in the reading; and, believing Violet

already deeply smitten, he fondly hoped this exhibition of talent would make her desperately, irrevocably in love with the writer. She was pretty; he liked her; intelligent, and a fortune; but a man possessing his advantages might get a wife at any time; the women always took to him; he would win her first, and decide about marrying afterwards; and uncle Charley read his very best.

Dora and Joe, their chairs drawn a little behind the circle, amused themselves rolling up little pillets of paper and taking aim slyly at the heads of the listeners.

Although Mrs. Munson was *afraid* of nothing but *cats*, she had no fancy for bugs, the pincher in particular; and every time one of the little balls came against her head, starting and looking apprehensively round, she brushed her cap and shook her dress. *She* did not hear a word of the poem; *her* thoughts were altogether of *bugs*! The preface was humorous, or rather intended to be such. Heaven never intended Uncle Charley for a wit. Mrs. Munson's was not a mirthful face. He did not mind her gravity; he heard Dora and Joe laughing. Violet and Mr. Wallingford were smiling; and, encouraged, the poet read on with spirit. Violet sighed, poor thing! girls in love always sigh: vain man, he was quite flattered by it. The scene changed: the lovers were in the depths of despair. Uncle Charley's forte was reading with pathos. His intonations were most touching. Had he been dealing with sense, instead of sound, he might have created quite a sensation; as it was, feeling very sleepy, Violet escaped from the poem into reveries of the past. Sighs now were well-timed. Miss Skimpton just remembered that she had no stockings darned for Sunday, which gave quite a

tragic cast to her cattish physiognomy. Seeing the candles flaring, Miss Mary, who had had her feelings lacerated very often while the poem was in progress, rose softly and went to the window to let down the sash. Uncle Charles thought her the perfection of a sister; he was himself a pattern brother; but his brow grew dark, and, stopping abruptly, he fortified his amiability by a huge pinch of snuff, and sneezing away a portion of his irritability, cleared his throat, and giving a quick glance round at his auditors, resumed the reading. The glance was encouraging. Eva was thinking of poor Betty Green; Mr. Wallingford, rather tired, that Eliza must be very lonesome and wishing him at home; but Mrs. Munson! why does she bend so low over her basket—her hand now thrust into her pocket, then feeling behind her on the chair—is she seeking her pocket-handkerchief? A *tear* from *her* would, indeed, be a *triumph*! And so impressed was the poet with the awkwardness of weeping without a handkerchief, that when she put aside her dress and looked round her on the carpet, the triumphant author had serious thoughts of laying down his manuscript and assisting in the search. Dora and Joe were watching him, and Mr. Wallingford—a quiet, subdued quiz in his own way—also guessed the unreasonable hope.

“Eva, Eva!” and Mrs. Munson gave her a jog with her elbow, “have you got my spool of cotton?”

Poor Uncle Charley! the manuscript dropped from his hand; a moment he stared at the speaker in blank amazement, and, crushing the poem in his hand, thrust it into his pocket. Stumbling over her father’s legs,—his feet were on the rounds of her chair,—slipping behind Uncle Charles, Dora raised her hands above the

poet's head, the points of the fingers together, and, as if snuffing out a candle, as she brought them down on the bald spot, slowly, distinctly, emphatically pronounced the word "*extinguished!*" at which Joe exploded in an uproarious "he! he! he!" Dora shouted; everybody laughed, good-natured Uncle Charley as heartily as any.

"You little rogue!" and, seizing her by the wrists, holding her fast, Uncle Charley revenged himself by a dozen kisses.

After such an interruption, to proceed was impossible, though everybody urged it. Mr. Wallingford most solemnly and pathetically, his lips quivering and his voice quavering in the effort to restrain his laughter. Fortunately, Mrs. Munson's carriage drove to the door at the moment, and reminding the girls that the horses would not stand, apprehensive lest Uncle Charley might relent and be induced to resume the poem, Mrs. Munson took leave without waiting to tie on her bonnet; and, offering to set Miss Skimpton down at home, bustled off, escorted by Mr. Wallingford.

"Father, dear, won't you slip Fancy's bridle over your arm and take him home for me?" asked Dora. "I'm going to Elmwood with neighbor;" and, uninvited, Dora sprang into the carriage. Everybody was in, the horses champing their bits and pawing the ground, and Violet, thinking they were going to dash off every moment, executed a gamut of shrieks, with a running accompaniment of "Heavens! O Tom! mercy! they're off!"

"Joe!" screamed Mrs. Munson, in her shrillest tone.

"Joe!" echoed Mr. Wallingford, in his subdued, sick-room voice.

But there Joe stood on the steps, talking and laughing

as unconcernedly with Uncle Charley as if his mother was not getting into a fury, Violet calling to him for mercy's sake to come, or Miss Skimpton, squeaking Joe, every letter whistling through her badly-fitting false teeth, and muttering epithets in an under-tone she would as lieve neither Joe nor his mother heard.

"Home, Tom!" said Mrs. Munson, out of all patience.

"Joe, we're going to leave you; going, going, gone!" shouted Dora, at the top of her voice, as they drove off.

"By Jove, I'm *disinherited!*" and after them he dashed, at full speed; but Mr. Joe and Tom were great friends; the race was not long; he soon overtook the carriage; and, springing up behind, holding on by the tassels, called to Dora to know what the insiders were doing.

"Abusing you," screamed Dora; her head out of the window.

"Home, Tom!" shouted Joe, ridiculously, like his mother.

"Hold your tongue!" cried the mother; one would have thought the same person was speaking.

"Hold my *tongue*, my dear mother! it's as much as I can do to hold myself on; I vow, I'm shaken out of my boots. Hello! Tom, there goes my hat!"

Tom stopped; Joe snatched up the hat, tossed to the ground with that expectation, and jumping on the box, letting down the glass in front, entered into conversation as if nothing at all had happened. Arrived at Miss Skimpton's lodgings, Joe handed the spinster out à la Sir Charles Grandison, and bowed her into the house.

"Now," he said, as he resumed his place by Tom, "since we've got rid of Tabatha, we'll discuss the poem;"

and he kept his mother scolding and the girls shouting the rest of the drive.

"Come in, Dora it's ; too late for you to go home," said Mrs. Munson, as she stepped out of the carriage at her own door.

"Thank you, neighbor ! Joe and me arranged the programme before we went to Linden Hill ;" and Dora walked up the steps as if *she*, and not Mrs. Munson, was the mistress of Elmwood.

They found the household in great commotion, and Clemence in hysterics. It seems Joe that morning had shot an owl, and, intending to have some fun with it, stuffed the ugly thing, filled its eyes with phosphorus, and instructed his accomplices to suspend it over Clemence's chamber door, so that it should pounce down upon her when she retired to bed ; and it was to enjoy the scene that Dora volunteered to be their guest. But, notwithstanding the united efforts of Rose and Debby to detain the Frenchwoman down stairs until after prayers, Clemence persisted in indulging in a short nap. The catastrophe had just occurred. Dora and Joe arrived only in time for the hysterics.

Weary, and anxious "*to get prayers over*," a phrase frequently used, but difficult to comprehend, Mrs. Munson rang for the domestics as soon as she entered the house. At the three rings, the signal for prayers, Debby and Rose came in tittering, the corner of their aprons to their faces ; whereupon Mrs. Munson asked angrily if they had the toothache, which made them laugh outright, and set Joe and Dora off. Looking very fierce, seated before the stand with the lights, the great family Bible open before her, Mrs. Munson read the chapter. *Praise* was ignored altogether that

night; to sing was out of the question when there was so much laughing; and, the prayer read, Mrs. Munson retired to bed. She had had what the mistress of Elmwood styled family devotions; consequently discharged her duty, and her conscience was easy. Are there not other Mrs. Munsons besides the mistress of Elmwood? none who, rushing in the effervescence of mirth or anger into the presence of *Him* before whom *angels* veil their faces, imagine because they hurry over a few set phrases that they have offered the acceptable sacrifice of prayer and praise?

The next was an eventful day at Elmwood. It brought a summons to Joe to return to college, and two telegraphic dispatches to Violet. The Seaton's were going to Long Branch, and would take no denial; she must accompany them! The other was from Vane, stating he had made every arrangement for her doing so; which latter excited Violet's mirth, considering it an unnecessary flourish on the part of the executor. That she should have money whenever she wanted it, was, in her opinion, as fixed a law of nature as that the sun should rise and set. The trip to the Branch was a sudden thought, to be carried out on the instant. Violet must leave in the next morning's train; and commissioning Dora to make her adieus to her mother and father, leaving Clemence to pack, Eva and Violet, before the sun got hot, went to Linden Hill to say good-bye to Miss Mary. The leave-taking over, in order to get home as soon as possible, and have the shade, Eva proposed their taking the short cut through the woods. Miss Mary knew of a still more direct path, but they would have to cross a sylvan bridge, videlicet, an old tree across the stream. Alarmed at the mere suggestion, Violet declined that on the spot; but Miss Mary assured her the most that could happen would be getting

her feet wet. Rather nervous at the idea, she consented, and, very sad at the thought of parting, the girls set off.

Inpolitic, as if the aim of her life was to make enemies, with a brighter face than she had worn since coming to Elmwood, Clemence rushed to the kitchen with the *good news*, which announcement Debby had already made, and almost in the same words, for Debby and Rose were as tired of the old Frenchwoman as *she* of them; and in the excess of her joy, Clemence indulged in such ecstasies of delight, that, incensed beyond measure, and addicted to long words, Rose, giving her to understand it was her "*magnanimous* opinion she was the most ungratefulest of her sek," revenged her slighted hospitality by shaking the coffee-pot, when pouring out for old Frenchy, as she called Clemence, and helping her to cakes as cold as her welcome henceforth in the kitchen.

Dreading all the while that fallen tree, when they got to it Violet declared to cross the stream, swollen as it was by the last night's rain, quite impossible; her head would swim; she'd get giddy and fall in; she was *sure* she would. Laughing, Eva tripped over and back again to reassure her; offered to walk before and hold her hand; and her hand clasped in her cousin's, the other holding up her skirts, one foot on the tree and one on the ground, Violet stood the personification of beautiful irresolution.

"Here's Mr. Dobson coming this way; if he overtakes us we shall have the pleasure of his company home!" cried Eva, glancing behind her.

Grasping a branch of the tree overhanging the stream, with a skip, a little scream, and a scramble, Violet was over, and, walking very fast, they soon lost sight of

"What is it, darling? I'll do anything for my little Eva; and Violet's eyes filled too, as she drew her cousin to her and kissed her affectionately."

"Promise me, Violet," whispered Eva, with a low sob, "that you will study the little Bible I gave you, and try to make it the rule of your life. The 'flower fadeth, the grass withereth;' like them, the fairest pass away—death comes often when least expected."

"I will, I will!" said Violet, bursting into tears; "since I have known you and Miss Mary, Eva, religion seems to me something very different from what I supposed it. I wish I was as good as you, my little cousin;" but, stopping abruptly, "hush!" she whispered; "don't you hear footsteps up there?" and she pointed to the bushes on the side of the path over their heads.

"I hear nothing but the wind in the pines; Nature's sweet, solemn music," replied Eva.

"I'm sure some one's there," said Violet, very much excited; "see! there are eyes peeping at us through the bushes;" and she shrieked, as a stone came rolling down, and Dora and Joe rushing from their hiding-place, laughing heartily at the fright they had given them, sprang on their ponies and galloped off.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIOLET and Joe are gone! Mrs. Munson and Eva in the porch, looking after the carriage as it rolls down the avenue, turns into the woods, and is hid by the intervening trees. Running up stairs and leaning from a window in Violet's room, almost blinded by tears, Eva watches for it on the road to Abbotsford, where they take the cars. There it is! the sun flashing on the tires, rubbed bright by the coarse gravel; the dark speck grows less and less; she can see it no longer. Sitting down, Eva has a good cry; wipes her eyes and intends to be quite rational, and go to work about something at once; but the terrier at the wood-pile is howling dismally, the telegraph dispatches lying on the floor, empty, half-open drawers, everything looking so desolate and lonely, she has not the heart to begin. That Violet was ever there, seems a dream; a dream, however, Eva would never forget; an epoch it was in her young heart, introducing new hopes, new anxieties to brighten or cloud her hitherto tranquil existence. They had begun already; would Violet write to her as she had promised? or, engrossed by the brilliant circle she had so often described, cease to think of the little rustic who loved *her* so much?

"The moon looks on many brooks," sighed Eva; "the brook sees but *one* moon! Poor me! 'tis but to feel that one most dear grows needful to *my* heart, and lo!

a voice is whispering near,—‘imperious, ye must part;’” and, notwithstanding the determination to be so rational, she had another hearty crying spell.

It was a lovely day; the sunshine quivering and flashing on the river, birds singing, and the cricket rejoicing in its short life, sending forth its shrill, quick chirp; but Eva’s heart was not attuned to theirs: their joy and that bright sunshine made her more sorrowful; the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep she liked better, for she fancied they had in them a touch of melancholy, though she had never noticed it before; and full of these thoughts, she was standing gazing listlessly out of the window, when Mrs. Munson, prepared for a stroll, came in and proposed a visit to Miss Mary. It was a melancholy, silent walk; they took the shortcut through the woods, and Eva’s heart full of Violet and the conversation they had had there, the spurious diamonds, and the value her sweet cousin set upon them.

Uncle Charley at the parlor window, saw them approaching, and came out to meet them.

“You have anticipated us,” said the bachelor, holding open the wicket for them to pass through; evidently running over with news of some sort.

Affecting to admire Violet, as he did, Eva was angry with him for looking so smiling. Mrs. Munson remarked his manner, but took no notice of the demonstration; it was always a satisfaction to her to be disagreeable and contrary when she was out of spirits, and, never glancing at his offered arm, walked up the steps without replying. Miss Mary came to the door looking pleased and mysterious as her brother, and, as she shook hands, said,—

"We were just coming to Elmwood to ask a favor of you, Mrs. Munson."

To this Mrs. Munson said nothing, until they got into the parlor, when she muttered,—

"It's one thing to *ask*, and another to *get*,"

Whereupon Uncle Charley, a regular marplot, began to beg her to promise she'd grant it, whatever it might be—an imprudence of which no strong-minded woman was ever guilty. Miss Mary signed to him to be quiet; but Uncle Charley never understood signs. "Say you will, Mrs. Munson." Mrs. Munson's brow grew black; the lady, sulky as was her wont, when annoyed.

"To the point at once," she said, addressing herself to Miss Mary; "what is it you wish of me?"

"Excellent neighbor," began Uncle Charley. The excellent neighbor most unceremoniously turned her back upon him; and Miss Mary embraced the opportunity to tread on his foot. "By Jupiter! Mary, it's no joke for a woman of your size to come down on a man's corns!" and the bachelor *rubbed* his foot.

Mrs. Munson understood the little *ruse*, and smiled grimly. In as few words as possible, Miss Mary informed her of their intention of going for a few days to Capon Springs, and her wish that she and Eva should join the party.

Her eyes on the carpet, silent a minute or two, suddenly Mrs. Munson said with a snap, as if a spring-lock had closed, "I *will*."

The listeners were electrified; they could not believe she was in earnest.

"When do you propose going?"

"On Monday."

"Three days to prepare for a fashionable watering-place, and one of the three Sunday!"

"Oh! we shall not require much preparation," replied Miss Mary.

"People must take *me* as they find me," said Mrs. Munson, defiantly; "Eva, I suppose, will need rather more starch; but Rose and Debby can get her ready."

"Mary, can't you wait a day or two, for Mrs. Munson to get ready?" broke in *Murad the Unlucky*.

"Ready!" echoed Mrs. Munson; "I am ready *now*, for that matter; I'd just as lieve go in what I've got on as not. You don't suppose I'm such an idiot as to attempt to compete with stylish city fools in their gewgaws and nonsense. Thank heaven! I've no imperial to clip and fuss with;" and she glanced at Uncle Charley's lower lip.

* * * * *

Violet was welcomed most affectionately by the Seaton, Belle, the Doctor, even the undemonstrative papa; above all, Harry Vane. But the return to familiar scenes and faces renewed her grief; while at Elmwood, unable to realize that her grandmother was *really* dead, she often wondered and felt condemned, at her strange, unnatural apathy—though no one else did; for even there, there were times when she was almost overwhelmed by her affliction, and it required all Eva's skill in soothing to restore her to composure. A sad journey was that to the Branch, pursued at every step as poor Violet was, by vivid reminiscences of the past,—the boat to Camden, the Jersey wagons, with their broad tires, the familiar faces of the drivers. James, the polite darkey, came up to the stage, hat in hand, to inquire "Where Madam was?" (but, fortunately, Vane heard

the question, and stopped him before it was repeated.) There, too, were the over-worked old white horses her grandmother had commiserated so much she threatened to purchase and send to board in the country for the remainder of their natural lives. Miserable herself, Violet made Vane equally so, by crying all the way; a thousand times she wished herself back at Elmwood. At last the hotels, one after the other, appeared in sight; the green bank, the bowers, the fresh, pure breeze blew in their faces, and the wide, wide sea lay before them glittering in a blaze of sunshine, the lazy waves rising, curling, and foaming, as they dashed on the smooth-washed sands, just as they used to when, a little child, she played on the beach making sand-waffles, or, followed close by Clemence, trudged to Howland's, her wooden waffle-iron in one hand and swinging her little bucket of stones in the other. Heavier than ever came back the weight on her heart, more distressing the oppression at her chest, the choking sensation in her throat; and, unable longer to control her feelings, she leaned back in the carriage and wept bitterly. She refused to go down to meals; would not bathe; though sometimes, after dark, was persuaded to a short walk on the beach. Hoping to go to Newport, Mrs. Seaton had not written for rooms at Howland's, where she always stayed; there were none to be had; Connover was crowded, so they had to go to Green's, where they found only a few slight acquaintances. Indisposed for society, Violet was very glad of it, particularly when she heard that Carry Simmons and Willie Ashton were at Howland's. Report said Willie was very attentive to Carry, the ill-natured; that *she* was devoted to *him*, and he *submitted* to her *attentions*.

Often, while at Elmwood, had Violet wished herself back among her friends in Philadelphia; and thinking only of the pleasant days passed there, she was delighted at the proposed trip to the Branch.

“Ah! *who* shall look into the dim future,
And, as the shadowy vision of events
Develope on his gaze 'mid the dim throng,
Dare with oracular mien to point and say—
This shall bring happiness?”

“Death! relentless death! My dead! My dead?” frantically demands the mourner, who knows not God; and the grim tyrant, frowning, points him to the grave, corruption, worms! “Death! oh death! My dead?” cries the Christian; and Death the Angel, looking upward to the skies, bids him hearken to the golden harps of the angelic choir chanting—“Glory and honor be unto the *Lamb forever!*” “Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

* * * * *

It is Monday morning; Miss Skimpton and the young Rector are at the station, waiting to see the party for Capon off. Uncle Charley, with his hand full of checks, and the ladies, and the ladies' maid, Debby, carpet-bags, cloaks, and umbrellas, on the shady side of the car; Eva, her head out of the window, talking to Eubank, who stands dangerously near, looking very disconsolate; Miss Phemy at the door of the station-house, her veil up, and pocket-handkerchief ready to wave adieu. A loud, shrill-shrieking whistle, and the train of cars rumble out from under the long shed and fly along the track. They are off!

Dining at Winchester, they took the stage to the

Springs. The clumsy vehicle crowded as usual; Mrs. Munson, Miss Mary, and Eva packed on the back seat. Very comfortable Miss Mary was, with Mrs. Munson's switchy person on one side of her and the sylph-like Eva on the other, forming a steadying wedge to keep the three compact! On the middle seat Uncle Charley, a slim six-footer with a solemn face and green spectacles, and a jolly human mountain, the mass of shaking flesh encroaching upon the slim man's seat and Mrs. Munson's lap! Debby and a couple of colored waiters (on their way to fulfill their engagement at the Springs) occupied the front; and the angry disgusted glances she launched at the darkeys amused the fat man so much that he laughed heartily, shaking his fat sides, his whole body, and poor Mrs. Munson's also. The road was rough, full of loose stones and ruts, and whenever the wheels of the lumbering machine passed over the one or sank deep into the other, the passengers, tightly packed as they were, were sent flying *en masse* to the top of the stage, the rebound bringing the *fat man* with crushing weight down on Mrs. Munson's knees. The voluminous creature, *facetious* as *fat*, spite of themselves, kept everybody laughing; but Mrs. Munson, fidgeting about and moving her feet as well as she could, the victimized resented the outbursts of merriment as personal affronts, looking daggers at the broad back and muttering pungent remarks about *over-fed* persons, men in particular, who made themselves comfortable at other people's expense, and did not care a *snap* who they incommoded. But the *fat man* laughed on, the road rough as ever; and, exasperated beyond endurance, bethinking her of her pin-cushion, Mrs. Munson took it from her pocket, and, selecting the largest pin, with

difficulty straightening the limb so as to affect her purpose, stuck it in her dress on the point of her knee; but it only set the fat man wriggling *worse* than ever, and, glad to remove it, she tossed it out in the road, wishing from her heart it had been the *fat man* and he had fallen on that sharp stone. It was very savage of her, but any one who has been similarly situated will sympathize.

When the stage stopped at the way-side tavern to water the horses, the masculines got out, and as soon as the *fat man* was gone Mrs. Munson began abusing him ferociously.

"Hush, aunt, there he is!" said Eva; and sure enough, with a smile that made his face look still wider, coming to the side of the stage,—

"Will any of you ladies have some water?" he asked blandly, presenting a tumbler.

Miss Mary and Eva fearing it might not be clean, thanked him, but declined. Debby shook her head; she would not drink because the ladies had not.

"Will you, Mam?" and he held it up to Mrs. Munson.

Looking scorpions at him, she turned away her head.

"All ready?" bawled the driver, jumping on the box and gathering up the reins; and, setting the tumbler on the steps, the fat man clambered in and took his place.

It was dark when the driver, whipping up the horses that had been allowed to crawl along all day at a snail's pace, descended the steep hill overlooking the settlement at break-neck speed; it was the hindmost of three, and, as the others got down without a smash, Eva, though she held her breath, did not scream.

"What building is that?" questioned Mrs. Munson, as they passed a long, low shed, a table running its entire length, and lighted by lanterns suspended from

the roof, in which were men walking up and down, smoking, and others at the table reading.

"That's the Pavilion, Mam," responded the fat man.

The question was not addressed to any one in particular; the driver, Uncle Charley, the darkeys—anybody but the odious fat man.

"A nice place for smoking," remarked Uncle Charley.

"*Grand* building!" muttered Mrs. Munson. "My cows live in a pavilion;" which set the *fat man* off again, and Mrs. Munson's knees kept time to the choaking he! he! he!

But they had arrived at their destination. The stage stopped; a man rushed up with a lantern, and opened the door; the lean man *leaped*, the fat man *rolled* out. Uncle Charley, Miss Mary and Eva followed; but weary, cramped, and benumbed, Mrs. Munson could with difficulty rise; and had not Miss Mary and Uncle Charley lent her an arm, would not have been able to make her way through the crowd.

Situated in a mountain gorge, the hotel, with its pillared front, was an imposing building. Lights flashed from a hundred windows; the band was playing in the ball-room; the hum of six hundred voices,—the arrival of the stage is the event of the day, and the whole population, men, women and children, always rush out to witness it,—porters flying round with trunks, tossing them one on the other in a pile in the piazza, as if determined to smash every breakable article they might contain, bewildered Eva. She felt as if she was in a dream, while she made her way with the rest of the party to the reception-room. Mrs. Munson, dusty and tired, savage from the imposition of the fat man, and rendered still more furious by the scrutiny of the well-dressed crowd

and remarks by no means flattering to her vanity, which, though whispered, were quite audible to her quick ears, extremely incensed, looked defiantly at everybody. Uncle Charley left them to go in quest of rooms, and returned with the unwelcome news that the only ones to be obtained were at the top of the house. Provoked at being roosted on the roof, in a room which she declared was not as large as her china closet at home, Mrs. Munson mentally lavished ugly epithets on herself for coming; Uncle Charley and his sister for having incited to it; and the proprietor, as she ascended the never-ending stair-case. Supper was over, but Uncle Charley sent them the best refreshments he could procure. Mrs. Munson had placed herself on the side of one of the two very narrow, very hard beds. If there was anything she abhorred, it was wooden-seated chairs. Rising as the man set the tray on the only table in the room, she went to it, and contemptuously turning over the slices of cold mutton with a fork, *nosed* the butter, and declaring it horrible, the bread sour, and the tea not fit to drink, ordered him to take it away. But Eva, very hungry, begged for a little supper.

"*This is pleasure!* people can't be satisfied to remain in their comfortable homes, but must run round the world seeking pleasure!" muttered Mrs. Munson, resuming her seat on the bed, the scarlet spots on her cheeks growing redder and redder, with a disgusted countenance eyeing Eva, as if she was disgracing herself for life by every mouthful she swallowed. "Go to the bar, Debby, and tell the proprietor to come to me. I shall leave to-morrow if he does not give us space to move in."

"I don't know where the bar is." The girl's tone

was not one she would have ventured to use at Elmwood.

"Havn't you an English tongue in your head? *such English as it is*, ask everybody you meet;" and, angry as her mistress, Debby set off on an exploring expedition through the labyrinth of entries.

Meanwhile, taking off her duster and bonnet, and hanging them upon the pegs in the wall,—intended to supply the deficiency of wardrobes,—Eva drew a chair to the window, and amused herself by looking at the tall mountains, and between the mountains, above their highest peaks, "above the eagle's flight," the deep blue sky, and stars seeming in the clear atmosphere so unnaturally, so tremulously bright. The columns of the piazza, springing from a square base on the ground floor, rose to the roof; the window overlooked the piazza below, on which were girls and young men promenading, a line of smokers and spitters by the banisters conversing as unconcerned as if *hoops* and *flounces* were not cognizant of the trespass. Bathers (the lanterns borne by their attendants, gleaming through the trees) were passing to and from the bath-house, a long, low building in front of the hotel, also boasting a pillared piazza; but, notwithstanding the novelty of the scene and the excitement of the day, mountains associated in Eva's mind with Bible memories, soon recalled her thoughts to Ararat, to Pisga, to Olivet; and, after a few moments of sweet and solemn meditation, taking her Bible from her traveling sack, she snuffed the candle, and sat down to read; she was roused by hearing her aunt ask, in a tone of extreme impatience,—

"Where on earth have you been *all* this time?"

"She lost her way, Mam;" and, looking up, encountered the eye of the flippant colored chambermaid.

Mrs. Munson's dislike to colored people was as decided as her antipathy to cats.

"I spoke to *you*, Debby!" the alarming scowl was directed to the smiling mulatto. "Where is the proprietor?"

"He says he will come presently;" and Debby ended her sentence without the *Mam*, so much insisted upon by Mrs. Munson.

The air of fashionable watering-places, however advantageous to the health of the employers, is sadly deleterious to the politeness of servants. Darting a fierce look at her, and then at the colored girl,—

"Our own servant will attend upon us!" Mrs. Munson's tone was by no means calculated to make her regret the circumstance.

"Isse come to sheet de bed," answered the darkey.

"I don't care what you've come for! *begone!* and don't let me see your face again!"

Tossing the armful of linen down on a chair, the girl bounced out of the room, slamming the door behind her. Never for a moment suspecting her order could be ignored, or that coming presently, in Capon parlance, was equivalent to not coming at all, more and more impatient, and, if possible, more angry, Mrs. Munson awaited the interview, the spots on either cheek flame color. Debby had read in the newspaper, a few days before, of a case of *spontaneous combustion*, and, sleepy and tired as she was, took the precaution of getting as far off as practicable. Perched on the trunk in the corner, her head resting against the wall, and her mouth open, she soon began to snore, every now and then mak-

ing a low bow. Mrs. Munson expected every moment to see her fall sprawling on the floor. She wished she would, and hurt herself, too: she deserved it for her impertinence; and Eva, how unfeeling of *her* to amuse herself looking out of the window, read her Bible, and go to bed so coolly, when she saw that she was so annoyed! Yes, and eat the execrable supper, the proprietor had, the assurance to send them, like a wolf, as if she was not accustomed to anything better at home!

The short inch of tallow-candle burned out; the light, suddenly flaring up, expired; but for the glimmer from the lamp through the fanlight over the door, the room would have been in Egyptian darkness.

"Debby, Debby!" cried Mrs. Munson.

"Mam!" yawned Debby, but half awake.

"Get a light! don't you hear?" and Mrs. Munson's foot came down with emphasis upon the floor.

"Faith and troth, and where am I to *git* it?" asked Debby, gathering herself up lazily. "I tould the man that little bit was good as nothing, but he said if we wanted a *whole* candle, we must buy it at the bar."

"I was a fool to come to *such* a place!" growled Mrs. Munson, beginning to undress. Fortunately her night clothes were in the carpet-bag, and very glad was Debby when the amiable lady got into bed and she had permission to seek her own. Fatigued as she was, sleep fled Mrs. Munson's pillow; she blamed the *hard shuck mattress*; she forgot, if she had ever read, that—

"Vainly Betty the pillow beats,
And airs the blankets, and smoothes the sheets,
And gives the mattress a shaking,
If a ruffled head, and a rumbled heart,

As well as the couch, want making ; and the occupant
—— to his own sharp fancies a prey,
Lies like a hedgehog, rolled up the wrong way,
Tormenting himself with his prickles."

"Were *you* fattened on this?" inquired Mrs. Munson of the portly negro who, in a snowy apron, stood by the aperture in the rock, from which the pelucid water was flowing, offering his dipper of brimming tumblers to the early risers who sought the spring.

"Yes, Madam," replied Uncle Ned, passing his hand over his protuberant corporation, with a fat, lazy smile; "I was all but a *skileton* when I come *hare*."

"Of what does it taste?" and Eva glanced apprehensively down into the tumbler in her hand.

"Of mountain air and green leaves, to be sure; what else should it taste of?" observed Mrs. Munson, sarcastically.

The spring was near the Pavilion, where were several persons at the table reading; others walking about, engaged in conversation; and, with her contempt of *starch* and *hoops*, *obsolete cap*, and *sharp, wide-awake look*, Mrs. Munson attracted universal attention.

The *vis à vis* of our party at the breakfast-table belonged to the class the mistress of Elmwood informed Uncle Charley she had no idea of competing with, who eyed the country folk rather superciliously as they took their seats; but, excited by the merry conversation among themselves, they seemed soon to forget there was anybody else present.

A very moderate eater at home, Mrs. Munson's appetite, sharpened by the mountain air, was alarming; broiled chicken, ham, eggs, and hot rolls disappeared with astonishing celerity. Occupied in appeasing the demands

of hunger, she did not observe those before her were the only eggs and chickens on the table.

"I'll trouble you for the cream," she said, addressing herself to one of the gentlemen, who must have been deaf, for he went on buttering his muffin without raising his eyes.

"Hand me the cream," said Mrs. Munson, in a sharp tone, to the servant in livery behind the gentleman's chair; the man was deaf as his master.

"Give me that cream," she repeated, angrily, to a waiter who happened to be passing at the moment.

"The cream is private property, Mam."

"*Private property* at a *public table*! pray what makes it such?" asked Mrs. Munson, in astonishment.

"The gentleman paid for it extra," replied the grinning waiter.

Taking from her pocket a long, old-fashioned wallet purse, knit in shaded green silk, she gave the man a dollar; and, darting a rabid glance across the table at the deaf gentleman, said, loud enough for the deaf to hear,—

"Get *me* some *private property*; I never drink milk in coffee."

In her haste to be off to the spring in the morning, Mrs. Munson left a number of things lying about her room, which, however, the door locked, and the key in her pocket, she considered safe against every contingency. But what was her amazement, on going up after breakfast, to find the door open, and the girl she had forbidden to enter it the night before fussing round, and, for aught she knew, taking an inventory of her valuables! her trunk open, and all the money she had with her, in it. Extremely incensed, Mrs. Munson demanded what she was doing there.

"Settling the chamber."

"And pray how did you get in?"

"I *has* a master key;" and the girl seemed quite amused at her mystification.

"And you may have this, too!" and, taking hers from her pocket, Mrs. Munson tossed it to her. Crushing the articles scattered around into her trunk, putting her money in her pocket, she went down to complain to Uncle Charley; but Uncle Charley could not be found. He had gone to the billiard room, with the express understanding between himself and the servants that, should a cross old lady ask for him, they were not to know where he was; and in anything rather than a happy frame of mind, she acceded to Miss Mary's proposition to accompany Eva and herself in a walk. The day dragged heavily away; but the longest must end.

Tea over, the party from Elmwood, attracted to the music-room by the thrilling tones of Miss —, a young lady of Baltimore, who, notwithstanding the temptation of a splendid soprano voice, had the good sense and good taste, instead of joining the thousands who murder Italian music, to strike out a style of her own, approaching very near the good old English ballad,—

When piercing shrieks and cries of horror drew them into the piazza. Something dreadful had happened! People, white with terror, children, nurses, waiters, in their eagerness to ascertain the cause, running against and treading upon each other. An open carriage lay within a few feet of the door. The horses had broken away from it, and, with a part of the harness hanging about them, dashing at full speed into the woods. Mrs. Arlington, the bride,—the pretty, blooming young bride, Ida Darnley,—was dead! They were bringing the body in!

Darnley himself, a gash in his forehead, following, white as the corpse. It was very, very dreadful; and the heart of the great human mass seemed, in deep sympathy, to have stilled its throbbing. No one moved. Not a word was spoken, as they bore her up the steps and into the hotel; but when they passed in, there arose a confused murmur of voices, and the question, repeated by a hundred tongues, "How did it happen?" Some said the horses had taken fright at a kite the children were flying before the door; some that they had shied at an empty barrel on the roadside; others, that a part of the harness had given way. How it happened mattered little; misery and death were the results.

Beautiful was the sympathy testified by strangers, many of whom did not even know them by sight. There was no music, no dancing, that night; no promenading in the long piazza; no careless laugh broke the solemn stillness; persons conversed in undertones; children went about upon tiptoe; the servants spoke in whispers. A deep, unnatural silence pervaded the dwelling of six hundred souls!

Mrs. Munson's room adjoined the Darnley's; nice, quiet persons, she esteemed herself fortunate in having such neighbors; but to-night most earnestly did she wish them anywhere else. Not that she believed in apparitions; if she had, the *strong-minded* agreed perfectly with Carlyle, that "each carrying about within himself an embryo ghost, it was a folly to dread what sooner or latter he would himself be." If there were such things as hobgoblins, *she* would like to see them; but she was annoyed because young people were apt to be silly, and Eva might wake in the night and feel nervous at their proximity to the dead. "A fellow-feeling

makes us wondrous kind," thought the recipient of her distress, amused at the calmness of the niece and the nervousness of the strong-minded aunt.

Notwithstanding her reiterated assertion that she would not submit to the imposition of buying her own candles while paying such high board and being fed upon such miserable fare, (Mrs. Munson had discovered that the liveried servant had scoured the country for miles around to obtain the fresh eggs and chickens with which she made so free at her first breakfast,) Debby was seen coming from the bar-room with two candles in her hand; indeed, it was whispered Mrs. Munson had applied to the proprietor to change her room. Two candles were certainly burning in the chamber; and with unwonted consideration for Eva's comfort, when Mrs. Munson got into bed, she told Debby to let them burn, as she was sure Eva felt afraid. And Eva, provokingly literal on the occasion, when going to bed, to prove her aunt was mistaken, blew them out, and was soon fast asleep.

Getting up very softly, Mrs. Munson felt about for the match-box, but she could not find it; so she drew up the window-shade to admit the moonlight. The watchman, either asleep or overcome by fear of the dead, had absconded; the wind must have blown out the light in the entry: not a ray came through the fanlight over the door. Eva's skirt on the chair looked as if it was moving; she thought she heard something close behind her, made a flying leap to bed, and covering up her head, listened, in a cold shiver, to every noise in the next room, startling and trembling at every sound. The footsteps in the entry ceased; all was quiet as the grave in the chamber of death. A sudden storm, common in that mountainous region, was brewing; thunder muttered in

the distance; the wind howled; and a cloud, every now and then obscuring the moon, left the room in profound darkness,—that darkness which seems to become palpable and oppresses with a feeling of suffocation. At the first clap of thunder, poor Mrs. Munson started up in bed, the dim, ghastly moombeams quivering on the floor, creeping closer and closer together, formed themselves into a coffin! The chamber door, though locked, opened! it was not fancy, as with a horrible fascination she gazed at it; the space grew wider and wider, and a sheeted figure glided in! I say *glided*, for there was no sound of footfall, no rustling of drapery, though the winding-sheet trailed on the floor. Slowly it approached the bed; nearer and nearer. Merciful heaven! it was *Ida Arlington*! The blue moonlight playing over her rigid features, her eyes fixed in a cold, stony gaze upon Mrs. Munson! Should it *speak* to her; should it *touch* her, she would *die*! A cloud came over the moon; she was in the dark with the *dead bride*!

A wild, unearthly shriek rang through the hotel, curdling the blood of those who heard it, and awoke the *strong-minded*; a pillow over her face; she was suffering from nightmare! But from *that hour* never was Mrs. Munson heard to ridicule ghostly *terrors*. The body was taken home the next day.

The ball-room that night presented the usual scene of festivity. Every one seemed to forget that the next shaft of the fell-destroyer might be aimed at their own breasts. Mrs. Munson had had enough of Capon. Fortunately, seats were to be had in one of the stages; and, leaving Miss Mary and her brother to enjoy the water, she returned home,—Debby, sick of the place as her mistress; and Eva compensated, for whatever amusement

she might have lost at Capon, by the delight the young minister testified at seeing her. Another happiness awaited her,—a letter from Violet. Hasty, sad, and incoherent, after an account of her melancholy journey, she added,—

“Your father was right, dear Eva, in his estimate of earthly happiness. As poor grandmother once said to me, when speaking on the subject, ‘We all *talk* of happiness, but *who* has found it?’ Yes; she warned me that sorrow was the common lot, and I must not hope to escape. It is true, I have learned by sad experience that love, friendship—ay, happiness, is indeed *a* dream, with intervals of sad awakenings! Yet there are hearts that must dream; and mine, I fear, is one. Were my life always so wretched, I would pray *Heaven* it should soon end. Believe not what others tell you. Listen not to your own heart. Love! Oh, Eva, never, never love! It is a desert mist, cheating the thirst its semblance kindles,—a poisoned wreath, fair and beautiful to look upon, maddening the infatuated one who is duped into wearing it. With such wreathes were the Christian martyrs crowned: *they* suffered for their religion; *I* reap the reward of my folly. Simpleton! I assisted to twine it, and smiled when it was placed upon my brow. Eva, I have grown old in a few days. The beautiful faith in mankind, the sweet truthfulness of girlhood, is gone from me forever. Stripped of its illusions, what will life be henceforth? Oh, Heaven! I shudder to think of the long, long, weary, aimless years before me.”

Sorrowsing over the dead and the living, a stranger to the only true source of consolation, poor Violet was in-

deed to be pitied. Her next letter, pretty much in the same strain, ended with,—

“But I despise the world too much to care for it. Oh God! it is false! I *do* care for it, else why so very, very miserable? Pity me, Eva; pity your poor cousin.”

And Eva did pity her most sincerely, though gathering only from these dark hints that poor Violet was very wretched. Violet herself could not comprehend *why* her position was so changed. The world knew, though she did not, that she was no longer an heiress. For some days after she got to the Branch, she confined herself to her chamber, and at last, though with extreme reluctance, yielding to the entreaties of her friends, came down to meals, though she never could be persuaded to remain in the parlor. One afternoon, having agreed to go with Belle to the bower after tea, while Belle lingered to speak to some one, with her rigolet and cloak over her arm, Violet seated herself at the parlor door. A couple of ladies, she had not remarked when she took the chair, were carrying on a whispered conversation behind it.

“Ma! ma!” cried a fantastically-dressed child, rushing past and throwing back the door rudely against her, “didn’t you say Willie Ashton, who’s engaged to Cousin Carry, wouldn’t marry that pale girl in black with the Seaton’s, because she’s poor?”

“Heavens, Gussy, what an unfortunate memory you have! I shall really be afraid to speak before you.”

“Say, ma!” and by way of enforcing attention, Young America gave a jerk to ma’s black velvet streamers.

“Go away!” and pushing him from her, the mother turned to her companion, and glancing at a person just entering the room, remarked, “Did you ever behold

such a slinky? The woman has but two skirts, and one of them is in the wash."

Vane and another gentleman were walking the piazza, smoking. "For Heaven's sake, what is the matter, Violet?" he asked, as he hurried to her.

Taking his offered arm, "Let us go to the sand," she said, in a hoarse, choking whisper.

Shocked at her extreme agitation, he did not seek an explanation; Violet did not speak; only when Vane would have spread her shawl on the beach for her to rest,—"Not here," she said; "some place where no one can hear what I have to say to you;" and when beyond the fear of intrusion, stopping all at once, and looking him full in the face,—"*Am I poor, Harry?*" she asked abruptly; "don't be afraid to tell me, I can bear anything *now*."

She looked so wild, and spoke in so unnatural a voice, Vane shuddered, as he said, soothingly, "Not *poor*, dear Violet; the estate is embarrassed; all business matters are more or less so, at present; but people will be able to pay their rents by-and-by; and, in the meanwhile, you have more than you will be likely to spend. But why so singular a question?" The dreaded hour had arrived, some one had communicated his secret.

Without touching upon the report of Willie's engagement, in as few words as possible Violet related having overheard a conversation between two ladies, in which it was distinctly stated that she was *poor*.

"Damn!—Excuse me, Violet; but such fools are enough to set a saint swearing."

"Be frank with me, Harry, I implore you. I can go out as a governess; I'd just as lieve be a governess as

anything else; nothing can render me more miserable than I am; tell me *all*—do, Harry, tell me the truth.”

Vane assured her he had told her all, that there was *nothing* to tell; and the lawyer fibbed with so honest a face, Violet believed him. The shawl spread on the sand, they seated themselves upon it.

“I wish I had never come here,” sighed Violet.

“From my soul I wish you had not,” replied Vane; “but we have taken seats for to-morrow;” and they were again silent.

So well had the proud woman’s heart guarded her secret, Violet’s deep dejection and altered appearance were attributed by every one to her recent affliction. Vane’s manner to her was *perfect*; none but their most intimate friends suspected the feeling which dictated those delicate attentions, so quietly, so naturally offered, or question his right to bestow them. Reviving to the poor wounded heart as the evening dew to the drooping flower are those thousand nameless *petites soins* which show that we are tenderly cared for, which, though seeming not to notice, Violet fully appreciated. Long they sat in silence; it is friends, sympathetic friends alone, who can hold such intercourse. Violet’s eyes were on the waves; Vane’s on her. A deep-smothered sigh made her start; she had forgotten he was there. She looked up, and his fond, sorrowful glance, restored for a moment its wonted bloom to her cheeks. “Oh! that he was indeed my brother, dear, kind, good Harry, and I could throw myself upon his breast and weep the bitter tears that are choking me!” was the thought at poor Violet’s heart, as she turned from him to hide her tears. Vane heard her sigh, and in the quickly averted face read only sorrow for the dead; *aversion* toward himself.

CHAPTER IX.

"ARE you ready, Violet?" asked Belle, equipped for the breakers.

"All but to put on my wrapper;" and slipping it over her bathing-dress, Violet threw her veil over her coarse straw flat, and drawing her shawl around her, leaving Mrs. Seaton and Clemence to pack, arm in arm the girls sauntered down the wide walk leading to the bank.

"Violet looks better to-day," remarked the Doctor to Vane, as they stood on the bank, watching the girls descend the steep steps.

"Pygmalion's statue scarce warmed to life," replied Vane, smothering a sigh; "a great mistake it was, bringing her here."

"Wait a bit, 'till I'm done with these ladies," said the bather to Belle and Violet, as they passed him; "there's a terrible undertow; the sea is rough to-day."

But, brave bathers, becoming excited, regardless of the warning, and rather enjoying the strong breakers, further and further they waded out.

"*Glorious!* is it not, Belle?" and, while she yet spoke, a huge wave, rolling in from the sea, broke over them and knocked them down. She, the first to regain her feet, looked round for Violet.

"Violet! Violet!" Her piercing shrieks rose above the din of the angry sea.

Vane and Theodore heard it on the bank, but so changed was Belle's voice by terror, her own brother

did not recognize it. Some one was in peril, and they rushed to their assistance. Something at Vane's heart told him it was Violet. The bather was bringing Belle out of the water; she had fainted. Throwing off his coat as he ran, and stopping only to disembarass himself of his boots, Vane plunged in and made for the dark speck floating out to sea.

Heavens! they'll both be lost!"

"The man is mad! *nothing* can save her! he's throwing away his life! Do not, for mercy's sake! don't attempt it!"

But Vane heard them not; bravely he breasted the waves; the love at his heart lent the dauntless swimmer superhuman strength. He's up to her; seizes her dress! A long, loud shout, proved the sympathy of those on shore. But they rejoice too soon. A *tremendous* wave; they are lost to sight! Vane rises alone! There! there she is, but a few yards off! Again he grasps her dress, and, twining his arm around her, turns and makes for the shore. In breathless anxiety the spectators await the result. He nears the beach; how lifelessly she hangs! Theodore plunges in to his assistance! One, two, a dozen shawls are piled upon the sand; they lay her upon them. Is she dead? Yes! no! she *must* be! See how motionless she lies! How deathly pale! Look, look! the limp-folds of her dress move! she breathes! The eyelids quiver; she opens her eyes and gazes wildly around her; a sharp spasm convulses the beautiful face! Good God! she's dying!

The first object that met that bewildered gaze as the quivering lids opened, was Willie Ashton talking unconcernedly to Carry Simmons, and *smiling—smiling, when*

strangers were in tears—and in that *pang*, which almost broke her heart, all love for Willie expired.

Pride, womanly pride, lent her strength for the journey; under the excitement, she felt capable of anything; and people wondered, when, cold and white as marble, they saw her enter the stage. Theodore was seriously uneasy; Vane miserable. By the time they reached home, she was in a high fever; a long illness followed; nervous at first, it became typhoid; and as Violet seemed to be sinking, Mrs. Munson and Eva were written for. Day and night Vane walked the library; Theodore was out attending to his patients; but, hoping in the very face of despair, nearly distracted, impatient for, yet dreading the hour that brought Dr. Morgan, Vane never quitted the house. Mrs. Munson had unfortunately (or rather most fortunately) sprained her ankle; Eubank came up with Eva; their engagement was announced; and in the hope that the young clergyman might be able to impart some consolation to the frantic lover, Mrs. Seaton insisted upon his remaining with them until the crisis was past. Under such circumstances, people soon become intimate; the young men had many traits of character in common; strangers could not help taking Allen Eubank on trust, there was something so truthful, so self-reliant about him; his very presence was strengthening at such a time; sympathizing in the distress of others, he seemed to have courage for every emergency; calm, quiet, and thoughtful, his face beamed with benevolence; his smile—"a smile that could not light a face of sin"—was in itself a benediction. Soon every one came to him for comfort; even Clemence turned not away from Eubank with her *passionate* "*Mon Dieu! how you know? you no doctar.*"

Restless and miserable, the poor creature asked continually,—“She get well, n'est pas?” making to all, when replied to in the negative, the same angry response,—“Mon Dieu! how you know? you no noting; you no *doctar*.”

Handsome as the young minister was, while looking at him one thought not of *his* beauty, but of the “*beauty of holiness*.” Yet was there no *ministerial assumption* about Eubank; not the shadow of austerity; his manner was that of any other dignified young man; a little more thoughtful, perhaps, and kind, very kind. He was the first clergyman Vane ever really liked. Disgusted by the inconsistencies of Christians, he had almost come to the conclusion, as he confessed to Eubank, that *religion* was a grave lie.

Expert as Dr. Morgan's long and extensive practice rendered him in dodging questions, he found it impossible to evade Vane. Slip down softly as he might, Vane heard him, and was at the foot of the stairs, looking so very miserable, the Doctor could not find it in his heart to destroy all hope. The evening of the critical day, however, the day so longed for, so trembled at, the Doctor's only reply to Vane's question—“How is she?” was a sorrowful shake of the head. Staggering back into the library, Vane sank on a chair, and, covering his face with his hands, burst into tears, and cried like a child. Supposing *all* was over, Eubank was silent.

“Pray for her! Oh, pray God to spare her to us!” gasped Vane.

“Then she is not dead?”

“No, thank Heaven!”

Vane could say no more. Together they kneeled; and, if ever fervent supplications ascended to the Mercy-

seat on high, they were those offered by the two young men that night; and, as if in fulfillment of the promise, "Ask and ye shall receive," while yet they prayed, Violet opened her eyes, and, for the first time for a week, recognizing Eva, said, in a low whisper,—“Eva, I'm dying!”

According to Dr. Morgan's prognostic, should she rouse from that long, death-like trance in her senses, the most favorable result might be anticipated.

Too much affected to speak, Eva stood looking tearfully at the poor sufferer, when the door opened and the Doctor entered.

“Doctor, I'm dying!”

The Doctor smiled, as he approached the bed, and felt her pulse.

“Not yet awhile, my dear.”

How his smile pained Violet, who really believed herself to be dying.

“You are worth a dozen dead girls, child; only keep quiet; don't talk;” and, turning to Eva, “she must see no one; the fever has left her; that is the reason she feels so weak; but a little beef-tea and chicken-soup will soon set her on her feet again.”

Eva waited for no more; her bright face told the joyful news in the library the trembling lip in vain tried to give utterance to.

The transition from despair was too much for Vane; an hysterical “Thank God!” and he fainted.

Hitherto, his feelings had been masked under friendship; but, since Violet's illness, in a perfect *abandon* of feeling, he cared not if all the world knew how devotedly he loved her.

“Is it possible, Eubank, that it can be an answer to

our prayers?" he asked, as soon as Eva had left the room; "*your* prayer, I should say—for you are a good man."

"You forget the *Intercessor*, Vane; it was in Christ's all-prevailing name our prayer was made; it is Christ who presents and renders prayer acceptable."

"But, Eubank, might not the disease just then have taken a favorable turn? or, perhaps, it may be the effect of remedies?"

"Oh unbelieving and slow of heart, 'were not *nine* healed, and but *one* returned to give glory to God!' Vane, Vane! a good constitution, a skillful physician, *something, everything, anything*, rather than the blessings of God in *answer to prayer*!—ay, though made in faith, and urged with tears. Unless we expect our prayers to be answered, what a *mockery* it is to pray at all!"

"In truth, Eubank," responded Vane, thoughtfully, "a man hardly knows *what* to think; the wildest and most contradictory creeds are alike drawn from the Bible, and convincing texts found in confirmation of them. Then, again, so few practice a tythe of what they preach. I find religious people as passionate, as unforgiving, as much addicted to scandal as ——"

"Hold! my friend; is not grace 'a treasure in earthen vessels?' 'In ~~us~~ there is no good thing; every good thought cometh from above.' Should we set a candle in an alabaster vase, the brighter the light, the more perceptible becomes any imperfection or flaw in the vase."

"Pon my soul, there were so many flaws," replied Vane, smiling—poor fellow, he could smile now—"that I began to think myself as good as any of the righteous."

"We are expressly forbidden to measure ourselves by ourselves," replied Eubank; "did you desire to draw a straight line, would you choose a crooked stick for your ruler? In man's weakness, is the grace of God perfected; but it is only by beholding it in the perfection of Christ, that we may hope to attain to any measure of it."

"I wish I was a Christian," sighed Vane.

"You may wish to quit this house, my friend; but if it was on fire, and you sat there and made no effort to do so, you would *perish* in the flames. In vain may the cool fountain sparkle by the wayside, if the thirsty traveler stop not to drink of its refreshing water. He may think it delicious; may *long* for it, *thirst* for it, but *nothing* short of drinking will slake his thirst. Thus with religion: you may acknowledge that it is good and valuable; you may wish for it, feel painfully your need of it; yet *this* will never make your soul partake of the blessing of salvation. No, no, Vane; you must *actually* receive Christ as your Saviour; you must submit and give yourself to Him, expecting to be saved *only* by his *blood*, his *mercy*, his *power*, his *love*; seeking his Holy Spirit in prayer, and striving in *his* strength to keep God's commandments; it must be the daily, hourly purpose of life, to bring every thought into captivity to Christ; thus and thus only will the thirsty soul drink of 'the waters of life freely,' and be refreshed and nourished into eternal life. Believe me, no *respect* for religion, no general desire after it, no wish, no longings for peace or heaven, will effect anything."

Vane had reflected deeply upon the subject since Violet's illness.

"Dropping all metaphor, Eubank," he said, "what is

the difference in a man's feelings before and after this change?"

"The truly converted exclaims with the blind restored to sight," answered Eubank, "'Whereas I was *blind*, but now do I see!' We no longer live unto ourselves; but, denying ungodly lusts, crucifying the pride of the heart, the pride of the eye, live unto God. There's no mistaking it, sir; a man might as soon convince you, under the full blaze of the meridian sun, that it was midnight, as a truly converted person that he was not a *new* creature. Religion ceases to be a matter of *speculation* with him; it has become a matter of sense. 'God never enters the heart alone; light, love, joy, and serenity enter with the Holy Spirit.'"

In short, Violet's illness and Allen Eubank's visit were blessed to Vane. The signal answer to prayer affected him deeply. From that night he began to study the Scripture and his own heart; faith soon became a vital, active principle, and the fruits were apparent in his life.

Violet continued to convalesce, and she, too, often had long conversations with Eva on the subject of religion. One morning, when they were alone, drawing her down on the pillow beside her,—

"Eva," she whispered, "your prayers for me have not been in vain; my heart, I trust, is changed; and should my life be spared, by God's assistance, I hope to devote it to His service. Eva, I have *thought* and *suffered much* since I have been lying here; and often, when you supposed me sleeping, I have been thinking of God and poor grandmamma," she added, sobbing; and the offer of a crown, the possession of worlds, could not have

bestowed upon Eva the happiness those few whispered words imparted.

"Violet, dear Violet, death cannot part us *now*; *mine* through all eternity!"

Eva was weeping, too, for *very happiness*. Say not, ye splenetic, that earth can boast no happiness. Look at Eva's radiant, tearful face, as, kneeling alone before God, she pours forth her gratitude to the *hearer* and *answerer* of prayer. Though too modest to imagine it, peculiarly was dear Eva adapted for woman's beautiful, ever-present mission. Applaud the noble-hearted, burning to encounter the dangers and privations of India or Africa: it is well; but that is a greater, nobler heart, a truer missionary spirit, which meekly, cheerfully, thankfully struggles on patiently under domestic trials in the privacy of home, ever striving to win souls to Christ. Blessed, thrice blessed, they who so order their steps that they cause not a brother to sin; yet more blessed she who turneth many unto righteousness. Bright shall her starry crown of rejoicing shine with jewels—ransomed souls—the wealth of heaven.

Reclining on the sofa in her simple cambric wrapper, so pale, so fragile, so penetrated with gratitude to God and man, Violet never was half as lovely or worthy of being beloved. Vane could have knelt and worshiped her, but for the *new* feeling at his heart—there must be no *idol*. Yet, oh! he did love her deeply, devotedly; not only for life, but for eternity. His love had assumed a different character; upon the heart of each was engraven Holiness to the Lord; the love of the creature, purer, more exalted, was yet *secondary*. Fellow-gladiators, now, in life's arena, they would hereafter mutually

support one another in combating the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Under the shade of the old elm-tree, Vane and his little sister loved to read of fairy wonders. In Mrs. Seaton's quiet boudoir they loved yet more, with Eva, to study the Bible. Dear Eva's castle in the air was realized. Evening and morning Violet united with her in prayer and praise. Eubank had returned to his parish, where already his influence was apparent. Wrangling no longer about *high* and *low* church, they had begun to attend to the weightier matters of the law.

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Mrs. Ives and Meta were in town, and extremely kind during Violet's illness; they were frequently with her; and, after passing an hour one morning, were about bidding good-by, when Clemence handed Violet a note. Running her eye hastily over it, extremely excited, begging them to excuse her, she sat down immediately to answer it. Eva remonstrated, Mrs. Ives warned her it was imprudent thus to overtax her strength; but saying it was a matter of importance, Violet persisted.

"Who was it from?"

Evading Belle's question, and blushing excessively, Violet sealed and dispatched her answer, and, soon after, complaining of headache, requesting the room should be darkened, she laid down; a chill followed; and, when Mrs. Seaton (who was out shopping) returned, she found her in a burning fever. Dr. Morgan was sent for; fortunately he happened to be at home, and came to them instantly.

"What the devil has she been doing?" he asked, when he felt her pulse. "By Heaven, if she had as many lives as a cat, she could not stand *this*! if she does not die,

she'll be an idiot;" and he walked the room with his hands in his breeches pockets, in the greatest excitement.

As usual, the relapse proved worse than the first attack; but Clemence protested Violet would not die—not she.

"*La pauvre* child *no die!* Mon Dieu! she float in *la mer*; she know *nothing* one whole *weak*; and she no die—she no die now, *nodar!*" and, firm in the belief, the old woman did not wring her hands, or ask people what they thought. When everybody else watched the Doctor's countenance, and hung upon his dictum, Clemence seemed suddenly to have conceived the utmost contempt for him. "He *know nothing*, if he say she die!" and, shrugging her shoulders, she would walk majestically out of the room, muttering, "I know *bater dan he.*"

Mr. Seaton, who from the first had shown a great deal of feeling and interest about poor Violet, grew superstitious, and believed more in Clemence than the Doctor. Between anxiety and watching, Mrs. Seaton and Eva were quite worn out; so Mrs. Ives and Meta insisted upon taking turns in setting up at night. Vane wrote for Eubank. As the second crisis approached, how very, very long seemed the time; yet each anxious heart stopped its beatings as the clock struck—it seemed to ring out the knell of death. Ere another hour she might be taken from them! Vane felt the question of life and death was for *him*, not for the sufferer; to *her* the summons would bring unspeakable joy; to *him* a life of *sorrow*. But he was no longer *frantic*; he did not think he would *die*, or go crazy. Should she be taken, he believed the promise, "As thy *day*, so shall thy strength be;" and, casting his care (and it was heavy) upon God, his heart grew calm; and Dr. Morgan, who possessed

not the talisman of faith, wondered at the change in the lover's conduct. The crisis came; it passed as before; Violet lived through it, but so weak, so very feeble, they could only ascertain life was not extinct by the dew upon the looking-glass held to her lips. Thus she lay for hours; again and again was the glass applied. Dr. Morgan asked for brandy; she swallowed, and gradually revived to full consciousness; requested to receive the communion.

"What would I not give to partake of it with her!" said Vane, when informed of her wish.

"And why not?" asked Eubank.

"I am not worthy."

"Alas! who is? *Who worthy* to drink of that cup? My friend, Christ died, not for the *righteous*, but for *sinners*; the blind, the halt, the maimed, from hedges and from by-ways, are freely bidden to this feast. If you do truly repent you of your sins, and by God's assistance intend to lead a new life, and live in love and charity with all men; if you are willing to pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand of offence, and, with the girl, in the beautiful allegory of the distant hills, are determined to cast from your bosom the beautiful lizard (the darling sin, be it what it may) which silences the voice of God in your heart; if such is the state of your mind; if you accept salvation as a free gift, and seek from God strength to run the race set before you; if your hope is stayed on Him alone whose death these symbols commemorate, for *you* it is prepared. 'The *whole* need not a physician.' Come, then, I bid you, in God's name, and you will find your soul strengthened and refreshed by it, as your body is by the bread and wine. That you *are a*

sinner, a poor, helpless sinner, is just what you should feel; ay, in the words of the hymn—

‘In my hand no price I bring—
Simply to the cross I cling;
Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that *thy* blood was shed for me,
O Lamb of God, I come.’ ”

Vane bowed his head; silent, he seemed to be praying. Mrs. Seaton sent to say everything was ready; and calling to his aid all the firmness of his manly nature, Vane rose, pale as death, every muscle rigid, his lips firmly set. Neither spoke as they ascended the stairs. In the darkened room stood the table; the snowy cloth descending to the floor; the silver goblet and broken bread. Mrs. Seaton would have opened a window, but Eubank prevented her; he knew the service by heart. Supported by pillows, her hands clasped in prayer, a seraphic smile brightening her pale face, lay the dying girl—lovely even then, ay, more lovely, more touchingly beautiful than in the pride of health and buoyant spirits.

At that solemn moment, standing on the threshold of eternity, into what a small space had the vanities of time dwindled! Admiration, position, love—ay, *love was sweet even then*. An emanation from Deity, it brightens *both* worlds. The love of God, in his blessed Son, calmed every fear, and even with the Angel of Death hovering over her, sweet to the dying Violet was the love of those dear ones weeping around her bed. Vane could only trust himself with *one* glance; to *him* she seemed no longer *his* Violet, but already an angel. Falling on his knees by the bed, he buried his face deep in the clothes; but no groan, no sigh, told the agony of

the parting, though his form shook with the tremor of his frame. Every one kneeled, and in the deep, breathless hush, Eubank alone standing, in a low, clear voice, spoke the words of consolation and blessing. Poor Clemence's grief was so clamorous, Theodore was forced to take her from the room ere the service began. When it was over, and they rose from their knees, Violet embraced and took an affectionate leave of each; the last was reserved for Vane.

"God bless you, Harry!" she said, in a broken sentence, holding out her hand to him; "bless you for all."

Vane seized the hand, (his was as cold and clammy;) taking it between both of his, he kissed it again and again, pressed it to his heart and held it there. With an effort Violet bent forward, and, resting her head on his shoulder, whispered,—

"Forgive me, I have often pained you; forgive me, Harry."

Vane caught her to his breast and held her there, close, close as those arms could gather her to him, imprinted one long, long kiss on the ashy lips, and, laying her gently down on the pillows, rushed from the room. And calm as a wearied babe she sank gently away. No, she is not dead; she yet breathes; and, though faint and irregular, her heart still beats; the nose, too, is not pinched; her skin is warm.

All that day Violet vibrated between life and death; each moment they feared would be her last; but it closed around the anxious watchers, and she still was with them.

It is needless to follow her through the tedious stages of a second recovery. Her friends felt as if she

was indeed restored to them from the dead. A second time had Vane's prayer been heard, and *now* he questioned not that such was the case. Four, at least, around that bed returned to "*give glory to God*;" and, fearing more than ever excitement for the dear one, Belle and Eva agreed to enact the Dragon; and the golden apples of the Hesperides were not more faithfully guarded.

One of the secrets of the dressing-room was Meta's engagement; Mrs. Ives and Meta were constantly with them; and, one morning, when Violet was sufficiently convalescent to be again on the sofa discussing matters and things in general, Mrs. Ives came in. Evidently the dear old lady had a communication to make which she did not know exactly how to bring out. Calm and self-possessed, anything but nervous,—some doubted, indeed, whether she had any nerves at all,—her manner quite excited the girls' curiosity.

"Will you be surprised," she said, at last, "if I tell you Meta is to be married at once? This day week is Ernest's birth-day, and he has set his heart upon making it the most important and happiest of his life."

Mrs. Ives's nervousness was explained; she feared Violet would feel hurt that the young people had not postponed the happiest day of their lives until she was well enough to be present on the occasion. But Violet put her at ease, by assuring her she wished them all imaginable happiness; she thought Ernest's desire very natural, and a very pretty idea—that of connecting the natural life and the life of love. Thus relieved, Mrs. Ives went on to tell them the young people's plans. They were to live with her, and the wedding to be on *Tuesday evening*; the last was Meta's fancy.

"From childhood they have always passed that even-

ing with me," said the old lady; "married in church, they will return home to a quiet Tuesday evening tea."

The fancy was carried out; the friends, among whom were the Seatons and Eva, were invited to meet them at church. But, save that there was a beautiful bouquet at each plate on the tea-table, (a delicate attention from old Mary,) and an iced cake in the centre, with a couple of sugar birds kissing, (a surprise planned and executed by Jane,) it was in all respects an *old-timed* Tuesday evening;—no bridal gifts displayed, no charities curtailed to meet the extravagant outlay of the entertainment. Assembled in the parlor of the old ivy house, a brighter glow of happiness on each dear familiar face, in deep, heartfelt gratitude, kneeling there, the little family offered up their thanksgivings.

It was just the wedding Eva would have liked, but Mrs. Munson would not hear of it. She said his parishioners had a right to be present at their minister's nuptials; they had earned the right. Was not the Parsonage filled with presents? (*such as they were*) and had not poor Phemy worn out two pair of gaiter boots trotting back and forth to find out what would be most acceptable? besides working a great, sprawling, worsted cat toilet pin-cushion? To be sure, she might have found something better to work. Mrs. Munson always spoke of Miss Skimpton as poor Phemy; and Miss Skimpton of Mrs. Munson, as Mrs. Munson, poor soul; excellent woman, but so deluded! I really believe she *thinks* herself a Christian! It was arranged that Mrs. Ives, Meta, and Ernest should be guests of Miss Mary's; Belle and Violet stay at Elmwood; Mrs. Seaton, Theodore, and Vane have rooms at the Buck. The excitement of preparation was not confined to Elmwood,

though Minda and Jemima were hard at work there, and boxes and hampers constantly arriving from Philadelphia. Everybody in any way connected with the church, or who had been at all civil to the Rector, which, as Eubank was a universal favorite, included pretty much the whole population of Abbotsford, was busy getting ready for the wedding. The girls, very busy in that cozy south room, assisting Eva; for, having been so much from home, many little things were to be finished. Joe thought proper to take a vacation on the occasion; and, as was always the case when he was at home, Dora was constantly there, and himself, as a natural consequence, forever at mischief.

"Belle and Meta, have you seen Joe's flame?" she asked, the morning of the wedding day; "well, she will be here to-night. Isn't Miss Skimpton a sweet little creature, Eva? Don't laugh, Joe; you know you think her a *love!*"

"Dora, Dora!" and Joe held up both hands; "how can you tell such ——?"

"Oh, but doesn't she lace!" continued Dora, as naturally as if she was telling the truth. "You should see her straining the aching clasp that binds her tiny zone, to get it to the size of mine. It's not too large for Joe's arm, though; Eva and I caught him one night with her in his arms; didn't we, Eva? Don't shake your head; you *know* we did. Such a complexion, such lilies, and roses, and sweet smiles, and such a darling little mouth!" and Dora contracted hers, and pronounced "*stewed prunes!*"

"Lilies and roses!" shouted Joe; "poor Phemy's lilies and roses are dead—

'Dead as the bulrushes round little Moses,
On the ancient banks of the Nile.'

"Eva, Eva!" and Mrs. Munson rushed in and threw herself in a chair, looking as if she had lost every friend on earth; "the jelly is spoiled! totally ruined! That fool of a Minda, mistaking the demijohn, has seasoned it with whisky instead of wine; and so beautifully clear; transparent as amber. I had to send to Philadelphia for the feet; it's too late to get more."

She had talked herself quite out of breath. Eva suggested gelatin, but Mrs. Munson pronounced it stuff. Nothing tasted like calves' feet.

"I'll tell you what to do, mother," said Joe, laughing, as if it was a capital joke. He stood near her, resting with both hands on the chair before him. Extremely provoked, Mrs. Munson bent forward to give him a box on the ear; but Joe dodged, and her fist came down on the back of the chair with such force it almost skinned her knuckles.

"Oh!" cried the incorrigible, seizing the hand and kissing the red knuckles, as grave as if he had never smiled, "Mother, crowd in spice; *tipsify* it with wine; if it's as black as Minda, I'll insure its being eaten; I've only to tell Mrs. Carr it was made by a Latin receipt, and was a favorite dessert of Scipio Africanus;" and, addressing himself to the girls, with—"Ladies, you must know, Mrs. Carr is the belle esprit of Abbotsford; elevates her brows when she speaks; misquotes authors; has what she calls *distrain* and *spirituel* feelings; and talks of her nightcap slipping off of her head *nolens volens*, let her do what she will to keep it on."

"What shall I call it?"

"Jelly Africanus," suggested Dora. "I think I hear her asking for the receipt."

"Jelly Africanus it shall be. Dora, you're worth your weight in gold!" Joe effected his purpose; he talked his mother fairly off; she was too busy to hear him out.

Pale with emotion, her sweet face shaded by the transparent veil floating around her, Eva was a beautiful bride. Her touching loveliness even inspired Theodore, who gallantly assured her she reminded him of a water-lily shrouded in mist. In a bran-new suit and brilliant vest, (a present from Eubank,) Jemmie Green, the *happiest* little boy in Christendom, in a corner, playing with his fingers, casts sheeps'-eyes at the company. Never will this evening be effaced from his memory. A gray-headed old man, Jemmie will tell his children and grandchildren of the minister's grand wedding, and how the minister and Miss Eva talked to him, the good things they gave him, and the basketful they sent home to his mother. Truly was Eubank's a labor of love. Living upon his private fortune, he spent his salary in charity; and it was beautiful, at such a moment, to see him forgetful of *self*, passing round among his people, with a smile and a kind word for every one.

But I am before my story. The company had assembled; the Bishop arrived; everybody watching the door, and wondering why the bride did not appear. At last Eva and her bridesmaids entered; but Dora, unlike the others, was dressed exactly like the bride, even to the veil and wreath of orange flowers. Whispering a few words to the Bishop, Joe quitted the group, and going up to his mother, who was talking to Mr. and Mrs. Wallingford on the sofa in one of the recesses, stooped and whispered something in her ear. The mother started back, fixed her eagle eyes—emitting sparks of anger—

upon him : you could have lit a cigar by her cheeks, had any one been courageous enough to venture it. But the presence of the Abbotsforders kept her wrath within bounds. Turning to the Wallingford's, she said something to them in the same low tone, uttering a little shriek. Mrs. Wallingford *fainted*; the husband looked surprised and troubled, but his attention was taken up with his wife. Dora ran to his assistance, and when the mother was resuscitated, taking Joe's arm, joined the bride and groom. It was a double wedding. In order effectually to preclude opposition on the part of their parents, the young people had been married in Abbotsford by the magistrate, and had but just returned, having kept the party waiting an hour. Laying aside her veil as soon as the ceremony was over, Dora walked about and talked as if nothing at all had happened; declared the freak *an economy* she thought very praiseworthy these hard times, and quite a bright idea that, of making one entertainment suffice for two weddings. The boy-groom was in uproarious spirits.

Dr. Seaton and Dora made friends at once, as the children say; and, already on the most intimate terms, when he ran her about losing her bridal gifts, she told him,—

“She had taken the precaution to inform mamma, papa, and neighbor, that she was open to presents at any time.”

Eva's reception took place at the Parsonage the next evening. The company was as numerous as at the wedding; the parishioners, to a man, felt it incumbent upon them to welcome the bride to her future home. The sexton (Bob Nielle) with the rest, had joined the temperance society, and only drank now on rainy days

and at night. Miss Skimpton was heard to say—"The minister belonged to the people, and therefore they had a *right* to go over the house;" and so they did—in at one door and out at the other, from the garret to the cellar, in the pantry, in the kitchen, and in my lady's chamber, looking at and discussing their various presents, arranged in appropriate places, from the patch-work quilt (made by the sewing circle) on the bride's bed, to the elegancies of the drawing-room. His pale face red as his new vest, Jemmie Green squeezed his way through the crowd, treading on everybody's toes, and begging everybody's pardon.

"Ma sent you this, Miss," he stammered, raising the lid of a small basket, containing a few fresh eggs, "and she told me to tell you, Miss, she prays God to bless you both;" and, unbuttoning his jacket, "Miss Eva, here's a pullet I raised for you, Miss;" and the little fellow took the milk-white hen out of his breast and placed it in Eva's hands.

"Who would be without a people?" remarked Eubank to Vane, looking around at the happy faces."

"Every one to his taste," replied the lawyer, smiling; "I confess, though there are some great rascals among them, I prefer my clients; by-the-way, I was just thinking of Carry Simmons's gas-lit reception, and contrasting it with this; it was the tamest thing of the kind I ever was at."

"Different, as I trust, will be our lives," said the Rector.

"I hope so," remarked Vane; "it is whispered Carry is very jealous, and Ashton as neglectful; a sad prospect they have before them!"

"Look at my little wife!" (Eubank spoke as if he

loved to pronounce the word;) “does she not seem happy, though she must be tired to death, shaking rough palms?”

Worn out indeed, Eva was, and delighted when, having partaken of the refreshments, “*their people*” were all gone, calling her *the* bride, as if there had been no other. Dora forced her down in a comfortable low chair, (a handsome purple-velvet—one of two presented by Mrs. Munson;) “Joe, get a footstool; Doctor, a cup of coffee, if you please, for Eva.”

A pleasant evening it was, that first of her wedded life in the Parsonage. Violet and Harry Vane, were to be her guests for a few weeks; and sweetly did Eva acquit herself as the mistress of the house. The next morning, after breakfast, when the gentlemen were gone for a long walk over the hills, taking the “*Southern Housewife*” with them, Eva and Violet went into the kitchen, where everything looked new and nice, and made a pudding for dinner, which, of course, was pronounced perfectly delicious, though Eva forgot the sugar, (one of the chief ingredients.) They had determined upon old-fashioned early hours, consequently, had a long afternoon before them; so Eubank proposed a ride, and Eva and Violet brought their work into the library, and sitting there, chatted as in old times. It was a very cozy room, fitted up with book-cases and large chairs, a study-table, and some et ceteras not usually found in studies; for, as the Parsonage was small, it was intended also for a family snuggery, when the young people were alone; for Allen told Eva he would like to have her there even when he was studying and writing his sermons,—it would be so pleasant to look up and see her, and have her listen to

anything which particularly interested him, or which he found any difficulty in bringing out in his sermon.

Their chairs were by the open window, the sun sinking, the golden light streaming into the room and on the sweet faces watching the glowing sky.

"Violet," said Eva, "it has always seemed to me that the thought of earth to busy day belongs, and evenings like this, fraught with human love, bringing before us all dear to the heart—the living and the dead—past pleasures and past sorrows mingling with the present *now*, while the hushed holy hour of night has ever appeared to belong to *God*. The busy insect hum passed away, and coming darkness shadowing forth the long, long, dreamless sleep of death. Oh! Violet, pray that I may be kept from *idols*, that my present happiness, my love for Allen, may not draw my heart from its Maker;" and tears trembled in the young wife's eyes as she spoke.

Eva had risen, and was leaning against the window, looking out at the scene before her. Violet got up and went to her, and as she fondly drew her to her, whispered,—

"Eva dear, He who guides that little bird, cleaving its bright way through those rosy depths far, far up there, looking like a snow-flake on a rose's breast, He will, as you have often said to me, direct your steps through life, if you trust, as heretofore, in His unfailing love."

"Eva, Eva! come here; I want you!" cried Eubank, from the flower-garden; and, as she passed out at the glass door that led to it, Vane entered. For the first time since he had risked his life in saving hers, Harry and Violet were alone together.

Little remains to be added. The only mystery to be explained, is that of the note, which was from the son of Mrs. Irving's former agent, informing her that his father, believing himself to be dying, would restore the sum embezzled, provided she would pledge herself never to disclose the transaction. It was the false entries made to conceal this fact which caused the confusion that baffled the executor's acuteness.

That evening was the happiest of Vane's life. His boyhood's dream was realized; Violet loved him as a heart like hers must love, to bestow her hand; and ere many months had passed, in that once prayerless home, morning and evening, did the grateful thanksgiving of two earnest hearts ascend unto *Him* who "*ordereth all things well.*"

THE END.







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